MY ART AND MY FRIENDS

FREDERIC COWEN

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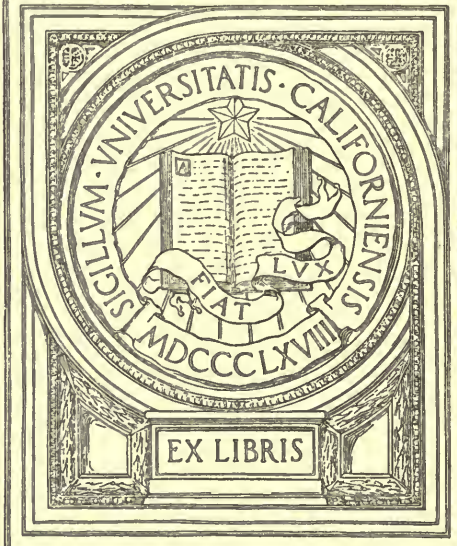

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MY ART AND MY FRIENDS

Elliott & Fry, photo.

Frederic A. Bowen

LONDON, EDWARD ARNOLD.

MY ART AND MY FRIENDS

BY

SIR FREDERIC H. COWEN

WITH PORTRAIT

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EDWARD ARNOLD
1913

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TO

MY WIFE,

WHOSE AFFECTION AND COMPANIONSHIP ARE THE HAPPIEST

INCIDENTS OF THE PRESENT,

I DEDICATE THESE RECOLLECTIONS OF THE PAST

417947

PREFACE

This volume is merely a brief record of the most important events in my not very eventful life, together with a few recollections and anecdotes of interesting persons, musical and otherwise, that I have met from time to time, many of whom I have called, and can still call, my friends. I am afraid that the little word "I" is very conspicuous throughout. To tell the truth, when I began to write I tried to avoid its use as much as possible, but I got into such a hopeless muddle that, regardless of the proprieties, I plunged recklessly into the depths of egotism, and thenceforth took as kindly to the personal pronoun as a duck takes to water.

The jotting down of these miniature thumbnail sketches—and they are nothing more—as they came into my mind, has been an amusing occupation, and if they only serve to while away a half-hour or so of my reader's leisure, their object will be fully accomplished.

F. C.

London,
September, 1913.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

PAGES

Earliest recollections—Piccolomini—Henry Russell—My introduction to Garibaldi—Lord Dudley—My masters Benedict and Goss—My first appearances in public—Old Her Majesty's Theatre—Famous singers of the time—Titiens—Giuglini—First performance of Gounod's "Faust"—My playing to Thalberg—John Ella—Herrmann the conjurer—My examination for the Mendelssohn Scholarship—Departure for Leipzig—Joachim - - - - - - - 1–19

CHAPTER II

Leipzig in 1865—Moscheles—Hauptmann—Reinecke—Ferdinand David—My fellow-students—Johann Svendsen's octet—My return to London—Performance of my first overture at the Promenade Concerts—Renewal of my studies in Berlin—Kiel—Tausig—Playing before the Crown Princess—The Emperor William and Bismarck—Paul Mendelssohn—Henschel—Return home - - - - - - - 20–27

CHAPTER III

First acquaintance with Edward Lloyd—Production of my first symphony, "The Rose Maiden"—August Manns—My friendship with Parepa and Carl Rosa—Robert Browning—My connection with Mapleson's Italian Opera Company—Anecdotes of our concert tours—Irish audiences—Practical jokes—Jean de Reszke as a young baritone—Ovide Musin, the violinist - - - - - - - 28–46

CHAPTER IV

Sir Michael Costa—My father's death—My position at the opera given up—Arthur Sullivan—Sims Reeves—Davison the critic—Joseph Bennett—My second symphony at the Liverpool Philharmonic—First acquaintance with Albani—"The Better Land"—Christine Nilsson—Robert Francillon and his humorous poem—Railway accident on tour with Nilsson - 47–58

CHAPTER V

My first visit to Switzerland—Liszt in Weimar—Lord Dudley—Recollections of my visits to his country seats—The Duke

PAGES

of Edinburgh and Norman Neruda—My stay in Milan—Rubinstein—"The Deluge" at Brighton—Gustave Doré—Prince Albert of Solms—Trip to America—Meeting with Longfellow—Opening of the Shakespeare Memorial at Stratford—The Bohemian Club - - - - - 59–76

CHAPTER VI

Trebelli—My first tour with her in Sweden and Denmark—Stockholm—King Oscar—Hospitality of the Swedes—Trebelli's hobby—First visit to Norway—Gade—Third tour in Scandinavia—Evening at the King of Denmark's summer palace - - - - - - - - 77–96

CHAPTER VII

My appointment as conductor of the Promenade Concerts—Anecdote of Wagner's "Meistersinger"—Humorous nights at the Promenades—Haydn's Toy Symphony at St. James's Hall—Production of the Scandinavian Symphony—My ballads—"St. Ursula" at Norwich—Visit to Vienna—First meeting with Brahms—Anecdotes of his music—Bülow—His wit and excitability—Pachmann—Richter—D'Albert—Goldmark and Popper—Hanslick—"Zigeuner" music in Buda-Pesth 97–118

CHAPTER VIII

Visit to Wales—The Welsh people's love of singing—Choral Society's picnic—Gounod's "Redemption" at Birmingham—Proposal to establish a National Scottish Academy of Music—Ferdinand Hiller—My Welsh Symphony at the Philharmonic—Shakespearian Fête at the Albert Hall—Mackenzie's "Rose of Sharon"—Anecdote of the "Meistersingers" Glee Party in Glasgow—"The Sleeping Beauty"—Dvořák—Joseph Maas—Visits to Paris to conduct my works - - - - - - - - 119–136

CHAPTER IX

Opening of Liverpool Exhibition by Queen Victoria—Abrupt termination of my overture—My fifth symphony at Cambridge—"Ruth" at Worcester Festival—"Dance of Reapers" disapproved of—Elgar as an orchestral player—My election to the conductorship of the Philharmonic Society—Mme. Schumann—Tschaikowsky—Grieg and his wife—My candidature for the principalship of the Royal Academy of Music—Appointment as conductor of the Melbourne Exhibition - - - - - - - - 137–154

CHAPTER X

A frivolous chapter—Marie Corelli—Robert Buchanan—The Savage Club—Its frequenters and amusements—H. S. Leigh and Henry J. Byron—The Green Room Club—Thorne and

PAGES

James in burlesque—Toole's love of joking—George Grossmith—The "Oasis" Club—The "Salon" and its æsthetic members—Frivolous evenings at home—Trebelli and Grossmith—Poetic invitation and its replies—Parodies of my songs—Burnand's parties—Performance of "Zampa" Overture—How we passed the time at a Musical Conference—My speech at the Tonic Sol-Fa Association—Witticisms and puns of my musical colleagues - - - - 155–186

CHAPTER XI

Voyage to Australia—Arrival in Melbourne—David Lee and his friend—The musical scheme of the Exhibition—Curious performance of "Tannhaüser" Overture—Opening ceremony—Sir Henry and Lady Loch—The Australian workman—The music at the Exhibition—Unprecedented series of concerts—Appreciation of the audiences—Squatter's opinion of "Ruth"—Trip to Sydney and the Yenolan Caves—Sydney Harbour—First acquaintance with Phil May—Humorous menu at a luncheon party—Adventure at a river picnic—The Melbourne Cup—Demonstration at the close of the Exhibition—Orchestral concerts in Sydney—Establishment of a permanent orchestra in Melbourne—Parry's desire to be its conductor—My return to England - - - - - 187–217

CHAPTER XII

Ysaye's début at the Philharmonic—Leonard Borwick—Schumann's Concerto and its conductor—Anecdotes of conductors—Dvořák—Peter Benoît—Giulia Ravogli in "Orpheus"—Paderewski—His love of billiards—My rupture with the Philharmonic Society—Second visit to Vienna—"St. John's Eve"—A Norman gentleman and the Battle of Hastings—Carl Rosa's death—My cantata, "The Water Lily"—Its withdrawal from the Leeds Festival—Performance of it at Norwich—Bancroft, Conan Doyle, and Barrie, at the Maloja—I again conduct the Promenade Concerts—Unsatisfactory performance of "Samson and Delilah"—Anecdote of "The Promise of Life"—Opening of the Queen's Hall—Death of Charles Hallé—My appointment as his successor - 218–236

CHAPTER XIII

My first opera, "Pauline"—Santley as Claude—"Thorgrim" produced at Drury Lane Theatre—D'Oyly Carte's National Theatre—Sullivan's "Ivanhoe"—Failure of the scheme—Misadventures of my opera "Signa"—Second visit to Milan—My acquaintance with Italian composers—Boito's fondness for Bach—Production of Verdi's "Falstaff" at the Scala—Melba's début there—Italian audiences—Revision of "Signa"—Its performance at the Dal Verme—Sonzogno's grievances and sudden withdrawal of the opera—Threatened duel between him and Boito—Performance of "Signa" at Covent Garden—Recital before Queen Victoria—Production of my fourth

PAGES

opera, "Harold"—Augustus Harris—Indifference of the public towards English opera—Dearth of librettists—Native composers and their many disadvantages - - 237–270

CHAPTER XIV

Liverpool and Manchester concerts—Choir's objection to "Phandrig Crohoore"—"Batley's" band—Moszkowski's joke about Carreño—Sarasate's mascotte—Forgetting his own music—First performance of Berlioz's "The Trojans" at Liverpool—Constitution of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society—My appointment as conductor of two societies in Bradford—Offer of conductorship at Buxton—My re-election to the London Philharmonic—"Ode to the Passions" at Leeds—Sympathy with my unjust treatment in Manchester—Termination of my appointment there—Song recital—Scarborough Festivals—A young lady's sudden gift of piano-playing—My Concertstück performed by Paderewski—The Queen of Roumania - - - - - - 271–293

CHAPTER XV

My reappointment to the Philharmonic—The Scottish Orchestra Its members' little jokes—The Glasgow Exhibition—Sousa—Adventure in Dunfermline—Hard work and travelling—Composition of "The Veil"—Artists and works at the Philharmonic—Brema's little accident—Cardiff Festivals—Welsh Eisteddfods—Louis N. Parker and Swansea—Conductorship of the Handel Festivals—Anecdote of a rehearsal—Little stories about my friends—My mother's great hope—Poem to my piano - - - - - - - 294–314

INDEX - - - - - - - - - 315

MY ART AND MY FRIENDS

CHAPTER I

Earliest recollections—Piccolomini—Henry Russell—My introduction to Garibaldi—Lord Dudley—My masters Benedict and Goss—My first appearances in public—Old Her Majesty's Theatre—Famous singers of the time—Titiens—Giuglini—First performance of Gounod's "Faust"—My playing to Thalberg—John Ella—Herrmann the conjurer—My examination for the Mendelssohn Scholarship—Departure for Leipzig—Joachim.

A LITTLE child of five years of age, seated in a stage box at a Liverpool theatre, listening intently to the strains of Verdi's "Traviata"; then, taken the next day to call on the *prima donna*, lifted up in her arms, and embraced affectionately. This is my first musical impression. The *prima donna* was Marietta Piccolomini, a very popular singer of the time, and as my readers (if there are any) will probably have guessed, the little child was myself. The incident is still very vivid in my mind, even after a lapse of over half a century, a fact which may account for the lurking fondness I have always had for the melodies of Verdi's somewhat old-fashioned opera. Before this musical osculatory event I was naturally too much taken up with other more important matters, such as teething, being short-

coated, etc., to think much about my art, though I have often been told by my mother that she felt sure I was going to be a musician by the pronounced habit I had of lying on the floor and drumming with the heels of my shoes, much to the detriment of the said shoes and of her pocket.

This was in Kingston, Jamaica, where I was born, and where I passed the first four years of my life.

In 1856 we came to England, and that I was destined even then to be associated with musical affairs is shown by the fact that on the very day of our arrival (I think it was March 5) Covent Garden Theatre was burnt down. Had I been superstitiously inclined, I should have taken this as a warning never to write operas, but unfortunately I did not think of it until after I had made four failures in this direction.

How I came to adopt the career of a musician from the very first I hardly know ; it may be that the composition of a little waltz at the age of six had something to do with it. I recollect, as if it were yesterday, going late one winter afternoon into the room where our piano was, and, standing up at the keyboard—I was too small to sit down—picking out the melody and accompaniment of the little piece. This circumstance, coupled perhaps with my mother's remembrance of my juvenile drumming propensities, may have decided my fate, or the matter may have remained in abeyance for another year or two. In any case, I cannot recall the time when music did not play the most important part in my life, and all my other studies

were made subservient to it. I do not mean to say that I worked harder than was compatible with my extreme youth, but playing the piano and composing (if such it could then be called) were my chief occupations, and I evidently enjoyed doing these, even in the very immature days of which I am writing.

My earliest musical friend was Henry Russell. Almost self-educated in music, he achieved great popularity by his songs, many of which—"Cheer, boys, cheer," "A life on the ocean wave," "The ship on fire," etc.—were household words both here and in America, where he had travelled a good deal, and are even now not quite forgotten. His voice was not particularly striking, but he had a strong dramatic instinct, and sang his own compositions in a way which never failed to make a great effect on his audience. His store of anecdote and love of fun of all sorts were inexhaustible, and many were the times when I used to sit on his knee while he either amused me with stories of the negroes, or made me all creepy-crawly with his adventures and hair-breadth escapes in the backwoods (many of which I firmly believe he invented at the moment), until in the end I used to get so excited that I could not sleep for hours after I was put to bed. His letters to me during these early years of my childhood used to give me immense pleasure. It is true they were very absurd, nothing but a lot of nonsense strung together, but they were meant solely to amuse a little boy not yet in his teens, as I then was, and this they certainly did. The

following ridiculous account of his visit to the Forum in Rome will give some idea of the sort of thing that delighted him to write, I think, almost as much as it did me to read.

"Rum: mille otto cento sessanta tre,
"Settembre tredice.

"MIO CARO CARISSIMO,—Here I am, there you are—I am here, and you are there. Well, without joking, here I am at Rum, and a rum place it is, partaking as I do of an immense quantity of *spirit*ual relief, and you can form very little idea what spirits Rum puts me in. I visited old Rum, and met amongst the images an immense number of Rum'uns—broken noses, broken heads, feetless and toeless, and teethless, beardless, whiskerless, headless, and the whole of it *less* than I anticipated. There was one fellow recognized me. 'What! are *you* here?' said he. 'Yes, I am here,' said I. 'How is your grandmother?' said he, holding up his broken hand and placing his thumb against that which was once a nose. . . . I became alarmed at his disdainful look, I turned pale and ghastly. 'Ha! Ha!' said he, 'I see, altho' I have lost my eyes; I feel, altho' I am as cold as marble; I live, altho' buried for ages. Do you take me for a fool because I've got no sense?' 'No,' said I, 'I would take you for *cents* if you were copper instead of marble.' Never shall I forget his look when he heard my pun. With one bound and a leap upon one leg (for the other was broken), reminding me of the catamount, he dashed with his foot clean into Cleopatra's eye, knocked her head

against Romulus's nose, which broke loose upon the arena, tearing round as hard as his nose could blow, and came in contact with an old Pope, who innocently rose up to know 'what the row was about,' and was surprised that 'after so many hundred years he couldn't be left in peace'—tipped up Augustus Maximus, who, aggravated at the assault, took me for an old *Roam*-er, and dashed at me pell-mell. Away we all went, down one street, up another, . . . Romulus, Augustus, Cleopatra, Josephus, joined in the run, they run, we run, everybody run, and such a running I never saw, and I am sorry to tell you we are still running, and I must sign myself your affectionate

"Runaway Russell."

He was indeed a man after a child's own heart, and although in later years I had not the same frequent opportunity of meeting him as formerly, the youthful affection I had for him was maintained until his death, and the little silver cup he gave me as a memento of an early composition still remains one of my most cherished possessions.

There are not many living musicians who can claim to have made the acquaintance of Garibaldi. I can. It is true that this acquaintance was somewhat of the "my grandmother's cat ran into your grandmother's kitchen" type, but as he was the first really great man I ever saw, I think the occasion deserves to be recorded in these reminiscences. It happened thus. At the age of eight I composed an operetta, which bore as its title the name of the great patriot

(the plot had really little or nothing to do with his life or career), and which was performed by my own relatives and friends, and privately printed.

When soon afterwards Garibaldi came to London at the height of his fame, a gala performance was given at Her Majesty's Theatre in his honour, and for once throwing off that modesty which has usually characterized my actions, I expressed the desire to present him on the occasion with a copy of my work. My father being connected with the Opera, I had no difficulty in obtaining the necessary permission.

The eventful evening arrived, and during one of the intervals I was shown into the hero's box, made by best bow, and handed him an elegantly bound copy of my *chef d'œuvre*. His appearance was very striking, with the supple frame, clear blue eyes, light brown beard, and bronzed complexion which everyone knows so well from his pictures; but I cannot now remember whether he wore the celebrated red shirt or was in evening dress. He did not speak English, and I did not understand Italian in those days, so naturally our conversation was limited; but he graciously accepted the book, shook hands with me, and seemed doubtful whether to be the more pleased at seeing his name in large letters on the title-page or amused at a boy's audacity in putting it there. This ended the interview. I have no doubt he forgot all about it the next day, or at least perhaps he took the book back to Italy with him and presented it to some street-singer, who put his own words to the melodies and sang

them with the usual guitar accompaniment. I should not wonder if they are being sung there to this day, under the impression that they are genuine old Italian folk-songs ! Who knows ?

The late Earl of Dudley comes next in my youthful recollections. My father was his private secretary, as well as treasurer of Her Majesty's Opera, and it was doubtless a fond parent's glowing and probably exaggerated accounts of his child which first aroused the Earl's curiosity. At all events, the interest which he immediately took in me never abated, and later on, when I grew up, was supplemented by a friendly intercourse that continued without cessation until his last fatal illness. As I shall have more to write about my relations with him as I go along, I will only say here that it was through his generous aid that soon after the composition of "Garibaldi"—that is, when I was eight years old—I was placed under the tuition of Jules Benedict and John Goss (they were not "Sirs" at that time), whose pupil I remained until I was thirteen.

My two masters were the very antipodes one of the other. Benedict was very austere and forbidding, or so he seemed in my childish eyes, and I never remember to have heard him laugh. My little heart used to palpitate a hundred to the dozen whenever I went to him, and the habit he had of dozing over the lessons—I think that was all the sleep he ever allowed himself—and then waking up suddenly with a sharp reprimand for some wrong note or passage, did not naturally

make matters any the pleasanter for me. Still, he must have been rather partial to me in his own way, for he often invited callers up to the drawing-room to hear me, and in later years I not only used to play at his big annual concert, but I owed many engagements as pianist and composer to the influence which his great prominence in the musical world enabled him to use on my behalf.

This annual concert of his was one of the chief musical features of the London season. It was held first at St. James's Hall, and afterwards at the Floral Hall adjoining Covent Garden Theatre, now used for other and more prosaic natural products than the sweet voices of operatic song-birds. It was always a gigantic affair, beginning about two o'clock and finishing any time after six, and was attended by all the rank and fashion of London, chiefly ladies, who, if they never went near another musical function throughout the year, made it a point of never missing Benedict's concert. A great many of them sat it out from beginning to end, with the aid of fans and smelling-bottles, not liking to lose even so much as sixpence out of their guinea's worth of music.

It was a sort of glorified ballad concert, at which every artist of note, operatic or otherwise, sung and played their favourite *morceaux*. I wrote, or rather arranged, several pieces for these occasions, notably a fantasia on Mozart's "Magic Flute" for eight hands, played by Benedict, Hallé, Lindsay Sloper, and myself; and a transcription for two pianofortes of the former's Fantasia on "Der

Freischütz," in which Arabella Goddard and I were the executants.

Sometimes when Benedict was otherwise engaged he would send me down to teach for him at a young ladies' school in Brighton (I was even then only a lad), and I remember I was always very nervous at the trying ordeal—more so than the girls themselves were. In fact, I have since heard accidentally from one or two of them (who are now grandmothers) that there used to be great rejoicing when they heard I was coming, presumably because I did not go to sleep during the lessons and my youth and shyness precluded any attempt at severity on my part. I can think of no other reason, so we will leave it at that. Benedict was an all-round accomplished man, and a very hard worker; indeed, how he ever got through all his multifarious duties—public, private, and social—was always a mystery to me.

On one occasion, however—namely, when he was composing his oratorio, "St. Peter," for the Birmingham Festival—he did undertake more than he could manage, and found himself towards the end so backward in the completion of the work that I had to sit down and orchestrate a considerable portion of it for him. I felt very proud of myself when, after the performance, the Press, in speaking of the instrumentation, selected some of the very numbers I had scored for their greatest praise.

John Goss, on the contrary, was one of the most genial, good-hearted men imaginable, and always

tried to make my harmony lessons as interesting and entertaining as he possibly could. He would make all sorts of caricatures and funny remarks on the margin of my exercises, and the letters he used to write me were full of that kind of humour which he knew was just suited to a child's understanding. For instance, in one letter he says : " Dear Youth, —I shall have the honour of looking in on you to-morrow as usual . . . so don't think to escape your weekly whipping." In another, in allusion to a trio I had composed : " Whereabouts is the *tree-oh !* to be tried ? . . . If I might be allowed to be present—*i.e.*, if I could get the *leaves* of yourself and friends and of the *tree-oh !*—why then I would speed my *bark* that way . . . I should like to taste its *fruit.* So no more at present, from yours truly,—A Professor of Roots."

No wonder that I looked forward to my lessons with him with a boyish delight which was the very reverse of what I felt with regard to my other master. I used also to have regular lessons from him on the organ at St. Paul's, where he was organist—*senza pedali* (as one sees marked on piano pieces) ; literally so in my case, as my legs were for some years too short to reach the pedals !

My first appearance in public was at Brighton. I had written a song which was to be sung by a Mrs. Drayton in a little entertainment she and her husband were giving in that town, and she asked me to accompany her. So I was duly taken down there by my mother (I could not have been more than nine years old) and dressed up in my best

clothes. All I can remember of the auspicious event is that there was an upright piano in one corner, at which I tremblingly sat down ; that the little stage and auditorium seemed very dark ; that the song was encored ; and that I was very glad when it was all over. No, that is not all—I was nearly forgetting the most important thing, namely, that I had on a new black velvet suit, and that my gloves and silk stockings were borrowed for the occasion from my mother.

This, however, can scarcely be reckoned as a genuine first appearance. My actual début in public was at a recital I gave when I was eleven, in the little Bijou Theatre of the old Her Majesty's Opera House. The programme was not very elaborate, but it contained some good and far from easy pieces, such as a prelude and fugue by Bach, another by Mendelssohn (the well-known one in E minor), some studies by Henselt; besides Thalberg's "Tarantella," an Irish fantasia by Benedict, and a little nocturne of my own. This piece was afterwards published, and the five-pound note I received for it was the first money I ever earned, unless I count a sovereign I was given for leaving off biting my nails, which sum, now I come to think of it, was obtained under false pretences, as I no sooner had it than I returned to my former bad habit.

An amusing incident occurred at this little concert of mine. From the time of my babyhood I had a black nurse who came over to England with me, and remained in this country for some years after I no longer had any necessity for her services. I

sent her a ticket for my recital, as a delicate attention, and she duly attended, arrayed in those gaudy colours which negroes love so much to wear. I do not know if she was fond of music, but evidently the excitement of the moment was too much for her, for in the middle of one of my pieces she called out—her face beaming all over with pride and enthusiasm—"That's my boy! that's *my* boy!"

What the audience thought of this sudden outburst I cannot say, but as I never had either woolly hair, or thick lips, or yellow eyeballs, they must have found my supposed parentage rather confusing to their minds.

My father's position gave me free *entrée* to the opera whenever I liked, and I used to go, or, rather, be taken there very often during these years of my boyhood.

I was always fond of everything connected with the stage, and I remember that one of my greatest home amusements was a miniature theatre my brother and I had, in which we were constantly giving performances. We used to buy all the necessary material for our dramas out of our pocket-money, and painted the scenes and characters ourselves, decorating the latter (they were only on cardboard) with little spangles of gold and silver and various colours. I don't fancy anything of the sort exists nowadays. The plots were usually of the blood-and-thunder type, but now and then we got up pantomimes, with practical trap-doors and articles of furniture that changed into something else when you pulled a string, like a real panto-

mime; sometimes they wouldn't work, but that is a mere detail. We combined the duties of reciter, stage manager, and scene-shifter between us, and although the little oil footlights and the red and green fire we used smoked and smelt abominably, such minor matters as these did not interfere with our enjoyment.

Our representations were often attended by a select and critical family audience, or when this failed us, we would requisition the cook and housemaid and any of their friends, who would weep copiously over our tragedies, or laugh themselves buttonless over our burlesques.

These theatrical propensities, coupled with my musical tastes, naturally made me only too happy to go to the opera as frequently as possible, and to have the chance of hearing all the celebrated singers of the period.

The old Her Majesty's Theatre (burnt down in 1867) was much larger and superior in every respect to the present one (His Majesty's). It was built in the old-fashioned, imposing style of which I think there are only two now existing—the Scala at Milan and the San Carlo at Naples—and presented a splendid *coup d'œil*, when full, with its tier upon tier of small boxes, rising like pigeon-holes right up to the ceiling, and making one giddy to look up to, and still giddier to look down from.

Among the famous artists I heard at that time were Alboni, the adipose but delightful contralto, Titiens, Patti (the latter, however, was at Covent Garden, not at Her Majesty's), Trebelli, Désirée

Artôt; the tenors, Giuglini, Tamberlik, and Mongini; the great baritone, Belletti; the bass, Formes, and many others whose names are almost unknown to the present generation. Titiens possessed the grandest soprano voice I ever heard, and was, besides, a splendid actress. In such operas as "Lucrezia Borgia," "Norma," "The Huguenots," and especially "Fidelio," she combined these qualities to an extent to which, in my opinion, no artist has since been able to attain. In oratorio she was equally fine, and her immense voice on such occasions, for example, as the Handel Festival at the Crystal Palace, towered above everything else, and made itself heard in the farthest corners of the vast building.

Désirée Artôt was another popular soprano of a lighter description. Her favourite part was "The Daughter of the Regiment," for which opera, in order to be quite realistic, she had studied the side-drum for some months, and used to play it herself in the first act as efficiently as any professional drummer.

Tamberlik and Mongini I remember well. They both had immensely powerful voices (like the more recent tenor, Tamagno), and were famous for their top C's; Tamberlik was the better actor of the two, and his performance in Meyerbeer's "Prophète" was very fine and impressive.

Of some of the above who afterwards became my personal friends I shall speak more fully later on.

I also remember hearing Jenny Lind (at a concert), Grisi, and Mario, but as they were all

long past their prime, I could form no idea of the voices that had charmed the whole world in the days before I was born.

Of all the singers of that period the one who made the greatest impression on my youthful ears was the tenor Giuglini. His was one of the sweetest voices that ever graced the operatic stage, and I do not think that anyone has ever sung the melodies of those early Italian operas as he did. As a man, too—I used to meet him sometimes in private—he appealed very much to my imagination and sympathies, for he was very fond of boyish sports and recreations, and especially of flying kites. He would spend hours in this pastime, and I am not sure if I did not think more of this even than I did of his art. It may not be generally known that he was also something of a composer, but I recollect hearing a little cantata of his at the opera one evening that was quite well written and very melodious.

An event that stands out clearly in my mind was the first performance in London (at least on the operatic stage) of Gounod's "Faust," at which I had the pleasure of being present. Titiens sang Marguerite—for which, by-the-by, she was not well suited; Giuglini was Faust—the sweetest I ever heard; and the parts of Siebel, Valentine, and Mephistopheles were sung respectively by Trebelli, Santley, and Gassier. It seems strange, considering the enormous popularity of all the music of the opera very soon afterwards, that at the outset the only numbers that really took the fancy of the

public were the most commonplace—namely, the Old Men's Chorus and the Soldier's March, the beautiful Third Act and the Cathedral Scene meeting with little or no appreciation.

Thalberg the pianist was another celebrity whose acquaintance I made about this time. He was not a great classical virtuoso, but he had a delightful touch and immense technique. I used frequently to attend his concerts in the old Hanover Square Rooms, and had a great admiration for him. He was a highly polished, refined, and affable man; indeed, I might call him amiable almost to long-suffering, since he once had the courage to listen without a murmur to my playing of his celebrated fantasia on "Home, sweet home."

All the same, he must have given me some good advice, for in one of my mother's letters to me, written while she was away, she says: "I hope you remember all Thalberg said to you." No doubt I did so at the time, but I cannot recall a word of it now. Possibly he told me to go home and practise scales and five-finger exercises, and leave his poor fantasia alone.

Among my early friends there was John Ella, the organizer of the Musical Union Concerts, and inventor of the analytical programme so much in vogue at the present day. His friendship for me began through the circumstance that he fancied he saw a strong resemblance between myself and a painting he had of Mozart when a little boy. He took me home with him one day to compare us, with what result I do not recollect, but I know

that I felt a strong inclination to tell him (I was rather a mischievous little fellow) that if he would look at the title page of a certain periodical called *Punch*, he would see a much more striking likeness to himself than any to be found between Mozart and me!

Santley was also among those whose friendship for me began at this very early stage of my career, and he was almost the first to sing any of my juvenile songs in public. One of these songs I remember was entitled "My beautiful, my best"; as a matter of fact it was neither "beautiful" nor "my best," but he made it sound as if it were both.

Another celebrity in quite another line with whom I was acquainted was Herrmann the conjurer. He was quite one of the best in the days when the art of conjuring was scarcer, and, perhaps, thought more of than it is now. His séances used to be held in the theatre, and I recollect that among all his feats that which I thought the cleverest was the wonderful knack he had of shooting cards from the stage to all parts of the house, even to the very back of the gallery. I used to practise this myself at home, and became rather proficient at it in a small way, until one day, our parlourmaid, on coming suddenly into the room, nearly lost the use of her eye, after which I gave it up.

Not content with his public success, Herrmann had an unpleasant way of exercising his legerdemain gifts in private, such as taking people's opera hats

and watches without their knowledge and putting them up the backs of other people's coats and into their pockets. This habit of his once nearly caused serious trouble. He went into the bank to cash a large cheque, and after a few minutes' conversation with the bank clerk, he asked for the notes. The latter said he had already given them to him. "No, you didn't," replied the conjurer. An argument ensued, the manager was called, and Herrmann asked him to have the clerk searched. Surely enough, the notes were discovered in the breast pocket of the man's coat. Of course, the trick was explained, and everything ended happily; but it took a little time to prove the poor clerk's innocence, and the affair might easily have lost him his situation.

At the age of thirteen my two masters were good enough to say that they could do no more for me, and advised my going to Germany to complete my studies. The Mendelssohn Scholarship, which gave the winner the benefit of three years' tuition at the Leipzig Conservatoire, was then vacant, and I went up for examination before old Sir George Smart and the other directors of the Royal Academy of Music. However, my parents, hearing that I was to be entirely under the control of the Academy, and not wishing to conform to this stipulation, withdrew my candidature at the last moment, and decided that I should go there as an ordinary and independent student. So in the same autumn I left London, and travelling by way of Rotterdam and Hanover, reached Leipzig after a

journey of nearly four days. My parents, sisters, and brother, accompanied me; my father, however, did not remain long with us, but returned to England as soon as he had seen us safely and comfortably installed.

This record of my earliest years would not be complete without mention of another name—Joseph Joachim—and I still look back with pride on the performance of my first trio at one of Lord Dudley's private concerts, in which the great artist condescended to play the violin part—no small honour for a boy only just in his teens. I had naturally many opportunities in later life of being associated with him, as well as with his celebrated colleague, the 'cellist, Alfred Piatti, but this red-letter day of my youth always remained as an ineffaceable impression on my mind, and I often recalled the incident to him.

CHAPTER II

Liepzig in 1865—Moscheles—Hauptmann—Reinecke—Ferdinand David — My fellow-students — Johann Svendsen's octet—My return to London—Performance of my first overture at the Promenade Concerts—Renewal of my studies in Berlin — Kiel — Tausig — Playing before the Crown Princess—The Emperor William and Bismarck—Paul Mendelssohn—Henschel—Return home.

In the year 1865 Leipzig was still a small, old-fashioned town. The handsome streets and buildings which have since spread in all directions, were only just beginning to be built; but the old city within the gates, with its narrow streets and gabled roofs, remained very much as it had been for the last century or two. The watchman with his lantern still woke everyone up by proclaiming the hours in his gruff, stentorian voice; and the soldiers marched in the early—too early—morning to the same réveille that their grandfathers and great-grandfathers had probably used before them. (I can even now remember the tune well, and never think of it without being reminded of a small wooden box, satirically called a bed, and of a pudding-like cover about two feet square which always left either my feet or my body to be frozen, or both, when it slipped off, as it did twenty times during the night.) The quaint costumes of the

country-folk were still *en evidence*, and so was the odour from the open gutters in the streets—an odour not quite unknown in Germany even at the present day, and one which makes us wonder why Johann Maria Farina does not use some of his superfluous eau de Cologne to fill the water-carts.

We had apartments in a house on the promenade just outside the old town, and also rejoiced in an unusually ugly servant-girl with enormous, projecting front teeth. I mention this fact because it became a standing joke amongst us, whenever we heard a noise in the kitchen, to exclaim : " There's one of Pauline's teeth fallen out !"

The Conservatoire at this time was still in the enjoyment of the reputation it had achieved under Mendelssohn, and several of the eminent professors he had gathered round him were occupying their same old positions.*

Moscheles (who had known Beethoven, and had been Mendelssohn's intimate friend) was my piano master. Though already an elderly man, he still retained the suppleness of finger, clearness of execution, and other gifts, social and artistic, which had made him a sympathetic companion and a famous musician. He was never happier than when playing to us one of his own pieces to show us how it should be rendered. He had one peculiarity which I have never forgotten — namely, a fastidiousness with regard to the height of the piano-stool or chair

* The old building, together with the celebrated " Gewandhaus," have long since been abandoned for more spacious premises in the new part of the town.

on which he sat that bordered almost on eccentricity, and he would increase or lessen this height with the help of a book, or a single piece, or even a single *sheet* of music, until he literally found his level to the fraction of an inch.

Hauptmann, my harmony master, was a great theorist, and what he did not know about chords and counterpoint and fugue was not worth knowing. But the pleasure I had in my lessons with him was rather marred by his habit of constantly taking snuff while he corrected my exercises. He was hardly ever without a "pinch" between his fingers, and being near-sighted, he would often get so confused between the two occupations that he would indiscriminately apply the ink to his nose and the snuff to the music-paper. My exercise books still bear silent witness to this habit of his.

"You may wash, you may tear up the books, if you will,
But the scent of tobacco will cling to them still."
(*With abject apologies to Thomas Moore.*)

Composition I studied under Reinecke. He belonged rather to the old school, and did not encourage modern innovations, but on the whole he was an excellent master. He was himself a prolific composer and a good pianist (especially as an interpreter of Mozart's music) and for a long time held the post of conductor of the Gewandhaus Concerts. In this latter capacity, though very capable, he was hardly inspiring, and he had a peculiar way when he was conducting of beating time with his head in inverse ratio to his baton, so that when the latter was up his head was down, and *vice versa*, which reminded

one for all the world of those little Chinese figures that, once set wagging, take a long time to stop. Domestically, he was blessed with a very numerous progeny—I think he had thirteen or fourteen of them. At all events, I know that whenever one went to his house they were all over the place: one of them would open the door, two or three of the elder ones would serve the coffee, some of the little ones would be running about the hall, and the voice of the latest and youngest would make itself unmistakably heard from the nursery. The story got wind that every time another olive-branch was added to the tree, he wrote a new pianoforte piece to help towards paying the initial expenses. Of course, this may only have been students' gossip, and I should not like to swear to its truthfulness.

Ferdinand David, for whom Mendelssohn composed his violin concerto, and who had charge of our ensemble class; Jadassohn, with his strong lisp; and Wenzel, with his rough but kindly face and grizzly hair, completed the list of professors with whom I had anything to do. But I also had private lessons on the piano from Plaidy, who was then established in Leipzig, and who was a popular teacher, chiefly on account of his system of five-finger exercises, which were supposed to give his pupils an unusually clear and pearl-like touch. Oh! how I used to plod away at those exercises! first with one hand, then with the other, then with both —slowly, quicker, very fast—just as if I were a little child in the nursery. And how happy I must have made my family around me, to say nothing of the neighbours!

At the time I was in Leipzig Schumann had superseded Mendelssohn in the students' affections; he was their great apostle, and the model on which they based all their early compositions. I wrote a string quartet while there, of which two movements were a mixture of Mozart and Mendelssohn; but I, too, soon caught the prevailing epidemic, and the remainder of the work was as near an imitation of Schumann as I could arrive at. Among my fellow students and companions were Johann Svendsen, the well-known Norwegian composer, Oscar Beringer, Swinnerton Heap, the winner of the Mendelssohn Scholarship, and Maybrick, better known as Stephen Adams, the song writer, and whom we used to nickname "Bricks."

Svendsen had just completed his now popular octet for strings, which was played at one of the student's weekly reunions, and of which we all then thought very highly. He had also begun his Symphony in D, but we only heard the first movement, and I do not fancy that he wrote any more of the work while he was at Leipzig.

All these companions of mine were several years older than myself; indeed, I was the youngest student at the Conservatoire—too young, I am afraid, to thoroughly appreciate the life. Still, there was much that I could take part in and enjoy—our weekly musical meetings, the rehearsals of the Gewandhaus Concerts, the walks in the Rosenthal Park and into the country, the moonlight skating, and the society of the many residents with whom we became acquainted. All this, together with my

studies—and I worked pretty hard—made the time pass pleasantly enough. After a stay of six months my family returned home, and I was left in charge of some German friends, which in a way was a good thing for me, as it enabled me to gain proficiency in the language. Previous to this my German had been somewhat elementary. I remember being sent one day by my mother to buy a chicken. On entering the shop I asked for the only thing I could think of, which was "flügel." Now, this in German means a grand piano, and it is only natural that the man should wonder why I came to him for such an article. He puzzled over it for a long time, and eventually arrived at the conclusion that I wanted to hire a lodging with a piano in it. I managed to undeceive him in this, but it was only after repeated attempts on my part, and the final happy idea of flapping my arms about and making a kind of chuckling noise, that he at last realized that I wanted "geflügel" (poultry).

In the following summer my studies were unexpectedly interrupted; war troubles had begun, and my parents, fearing that Leipzig might become a centre of hostilities, ordered me home. However, my stay in London was not a very long one, and after a year or so—during which time I had the satisfaction of hearing my first overture performed at Alfred Mellon's promenade concerts—we all returned to Germany, this time to Berlin.

Here I had private lessons with Kiel, Taubert, and the great pianist Tausig; and was also a pupil at Stern's Academy. Kiel was a composer of con-

siderable reputation, and a first-rate teacher ; but Taubert I did not care for very much, as his ideas were old-fashioned, and whenever I wrote a modern phrase or passage that I was particularly sweet on, he would make me alter it according to the conventional way he preferred. My lessons with Tausig were rather intermittent ; indeed, I think I really learnt more from hearing him play than from any tuition he gave me. He was a great virtuoso, a little cold, perhaps, but his execution was marvellous, and the premature end of his meteor-like career came as a severe blow to the musical public, who had had but a few years in which to recognize and admire his wonderful powers.

I was the only English student at Stern's Academy, and as no anti-British feeling existed in those days, I believe I was fairly popular among them all. At least I know that they all seemed genuinely pleased when they heard one day that I had been to play to the Crown Princess.

In connection with this occasion, I remember that one of the young Princes (it may, perhaps, have been the present Kaiser himself) would insist on running to my side and interrupting my performance by strumming with his tiny hands on the piano, until he was at last made to desist, and was carried out of the room by his nurse. I may mention that I played again the following year before the Princess at Windsor Castle, and that she requested me to compose a piece and dedicate it to her, which, of course, I did as soon as possible afterwards.

The old Emperor Wilhelm (then only King of Prussia) I used to see constantly during his daily walks and drives Unter den Linden; also his faithful henchman Bismarck. With the latter my sister and I were actually on speaking terms. It is true that our conversation—at one of the opera balls—was limited to three words on his part and one on ours (he said to us, "Sind Sie Engländer?" to which we answered, "Ya"), but many people have boasted of their acquaintance with great celebrities on even less provocation.

Paul Mendelssohn and his family were among my friends in Berlin, and it was like a link with the past to go to his house and, looking round at the many relics of the great composer, to recall all the incidents of his life, and the affection that existed up to the end between the two brothers. He (Paul) was himself very musical, and loved to have his brother's compositions played to him, which we often did.

It was also at this time that I first met my friend Georg Henschel. He was a lad like myself, and I remember even then being struck by the voice and style, which were soon after to gain for him so much popularity.

In 1868 I came back once more to London. My student days were now over—except for a few lessons I had from Charles Hallé after my return—and it was not long before I was well launched on my musical career, though I did not begin to make a livelihood out of it for some year or two afterwards.

CHAPTER III

First acquaintance with Edward Lloyd—Production of my first symphony, "The Rose Maiden"—August Manns—My friendship with Parepa and Carl Rosa—Robert Browning—My connection with Mapleson's Italian Opera Company—Anecdotes of our Concert tours—Irish audiences—Practical jokes—Jean de Reszke as a young baritone—Ovide Musin, the violinist.

So many events, so many recollections of well-known names and faces, now come crowding into my mind that I find it rather difficult to know where to begin.

First of all I think I must make mention of a small amateur choral society at which I acted as accompanist for a few years, not because the society was of any particular importance in itself, but because it was there that my friendship with Edward Lloyd first began. We used to assemble once a week in a private house for the practice of part-songs, etc., and Lloyd was engaged at a very small fee to help the male voices. He was then a young, slim tenor, and no one foresaw the position he was soon to make for himself, nor did I, personally, imagine for a moment that our future careers would bring us so often and so intimately into association with each other.

The production of my first symphony, when I

was seventeen, at a concert my father gave for me in St. James's Hall obtained me an agreement with Messrs. Boosey to publish all my compositions for a period of three years, as the result of which I wrote, among other things, the cantata, "The Rose Maiden," and "It was a Dream," which latter, through its being sung by Titiens, became my first popular song. When this symphony was played at Brighton a few months after its London production the bandmaster of a local regiment, who was present, came to see me in the artists' room, and after expressing himself very pleased with the work, said to me: "Did you score it yourself?" "What do you mean?" I answered, really not understanding the remark at first. "I mean, did you really do all the orchestration?" Being rather proud of this my first important orchestral work, I felt a little huffed, and said haughtily: "You may not be aware that the scoring of a big work" (with an emphasis on the big) "is usually one of its chief points." "I am very sorry," he explained, "but I thought that perhaps you only wrote in the melodies for the clarinet or cornet, as we do, and left someone else to fill up the rest." I suppose he must have noticed the look of disgust on my face, for he left me at once without venturing any further remarks.

As to "The Rose Maiden," it was produced the following year at another concert given specially for the purpose, and as it had the advantage of such artists as Titiens, Patey, and the celebrated baritone, Stockhausen, in the principal parts, it

made quite a success, and soon became popular among smaller choral societies, for whom, as a matter of fact, it was really composed. A facetious critic in his notice of the cantata found a resemblance in one of the numbers to a comic song of the period with the highly romantic title, "Wilt thou sew my buttons on?" This must have been one of those unconscious plagiarisms so often found in music, as I was not in the habit of frequenting music-halls in those days. In any case, the offending number was omitted in the second edition, and did duty afterwards as the chief theme in a new last movement to my symphony, in which place neither the "buttons" nor the "sewing" was any longer recognizable, so cunning is the art of the composer.

My symphony also brought me under the notice of August Manns, who, as everyone knows, was always ready to lend a helping hand to young British musicians. Which of us, except perhaps the very youngest, does not remember the striking features, the long flowing white hair, the black velvet coat and immaculate lavender kid gloves, and, above all, the cheery manners and kind-heartedness of the *chef d'orchestre* who at one time was the most prominent figure in our orchestral world? And the concerts themselves, when all musical London used to flock to the Crystal Palace every Saturday, and when the back gallery of the concert hall (the best place for hearing) was filled with everyone who was of any note in the world of music, assembled to listen to some old familiar work or to criticize a new one?

Manns' beat was not very clear, but his band understood him thoroughly, and he succeeded in giving very finished performances. His programmes were always very eclectic, and for many years everything new and worthy of being performed received its first hearing in this country under his baton. Once, when he produced Richard Strauss's "Till Eulenspiegel," he turned round to the audience and, by way of apology for any possible shortcomings, said: "Ladies and gentlemen, this is the most difficult piece we have ever had to play!"

Nowadays, such are the rapid strides our executants have made, an apology like this would certainly not be necessary, and I hardly fancy our orchestras would take it in the complimentary way it was intended. Manns was very jealous for the reputation of his concerts, and in his later days resented not a little the establishment of other orchestras in London to the detriment and ultimate disbandment of his own. But though his position became towards the end almost a sinecure, his personal popularity remained undiminished, and I shall not easily forget the scene of enthusiasm when, being compelled through failing powers to be only the listener instead of the conductor at the Handel Festival, he was called on to the platform and made to bow his acknowledgments. He will always remain dear to the memory of those who came into personal contact with him, and we of the older generation, and indeed English music generally, owe him a debt of gratitude that cannot be over-estimated.

Of Parepa and Carl Rosa I have many pleasant recollections. She was a most amiable and charming woman, and a singer of exceptional gifts, whose untimely death was a great loss to our art. Rosa, when I first knew him, was a violinist, and it was due to the tours he made with her in America in that capacity that they fell in love with each other and married; the independent means he thus obtained enabling him shortly afterwards to establish the English Opera Company, which became so successful under his artistic and business-like control, and which still bears his name.

For many years we lived in adjoining houses, with a communicating balcony, and we were on such friendly terms that we used indiscriminately to walk in at each other's windows, or knock on the wall of our sitting-rooms to say "Good-morning" or anything else that came into our heads. Our street, by-the-by (which we called "Venice in London" on account of the canal with its little island and boats immediately in front of us), was quite an artistic one at this time, for besides the Rosas and ourselves, we had a journalist (whose name I now forget) and the poet Robert Browning only a few doors away from us. The latter, whom I often met in society later, was a conspicuous figure in our neighbourhood by reason of the curious habit he had of always walking with his umbrella or stick over his shoulder as if he were carrying a gun.

I remember a curious incident with regard to this street where Rosa and I lived. I met a man in

Piccadilly one day who had been a frequent guest at our house, but whom we had not seen for some years. We stopped and chatted for a little while about the weather and other everyday topics; then I said how long it was since we had met, and asked him to pay us a visit. Naturally I thought he knew me, though he did not address me by name. To my invitation he replied, "With pleasure. By-the-bye, where do you live now?" "Oh," I remarked, "in the same place as before," (naming the street)—"you know, next door to Carl Rosa." "Why, yes! of course," he said—"let me see, that's where Cowen lives, isn't it?" For an absent-minded muddle of people and places this would be hard to beat. Whom he took me for, what connection, or rather disconnection, there was in his mind between me and myself, I never knew, for I was so taken aback by his remark that I merely said, "Yes, that's right," and left him abruptly.

When I was nineteen I joined Mapleson's Italian Opera Company, as accompanist on his concert tours, and *maestro al piano* during his London and provincial operatic seasons. My duties were manifold, for, as well as accompanying, I had to rehearse with the chorus, coach the artists, play the organ behind the scenes, and sometimes even the bells and suchlike instruments in the orchestra. Mapleson—or Colonel Mapleson as he was generally called—was one of those pleasant-mannered, plausible men, with at the same time strong business instincts, who usually manage to make their way in the world, and become popular. He had a way of what

is called embroidering his statements, but as everyone who knew him took these at a large discount, there was not much harm done; and in spite of this little failing all his artists and *entourage* were very fond of him, and worked for him hopefully and trustfully, even though their salaries might occasionally be two or three weeks overdue. He was also not above joining in our fun and amusements, of which, especially on our tours, we had enough and plenty. In fact, the last thing we ever thought about was the concert of the evening, and the days (and part of the nights, too) would he spend in playing games, practical jokes, and other frivolous occupations. After a concert or two we used to sing and play the entire programme by heart, and sometimes, if we had been unusually late the night before, our performance would be gone through in a somewhat sleepy and mechanical fashion.

I recollect one evening, when Titiens was singing, "Ocean, thou mighty monster," she left out the whole of that charming part about the sunrise. I, half asleep, followed her, and neither of us noticed what had happened until someone afterwards told us about it.

At another concert she was singing Arditi's waltz, "L'Ardita," and on coming to the middle theme, which bears a strong family likeness to the same composer's "Il Bacio," she went off into the latter, and continued it to the end. This time I was wide awake enough to know what was the matter, so I finished the piece in the same way as she did

Once or twice during these tours the only piano we could get was half a note too high or too low, and I had to transpose the entire programme. This was not of so much consequence in the accompaniments to the songs, but when it came to playing duets with the violin or any other instrument, it was far from an easy matter. Such little incidents as these did not trouble us very much, for, as I have already said, the concerts were but a minor consideration to us compared with our daily round of amusements.

Titiens, who, I should mention, always formed one of our party, was as full of high spirits as the rest of us, and not seldom was the chief instigator in any mischief a certain "nameless individual" found for our idle hands to do.

I remember one day her drawing our attention to a placard in a shop window opposite our hotel which bore the words "Errand Boy Wanted." Nothing would content her but that Foli and I should go over and interview the proprietor. So we put on our shabbiest clothes, and proceeded to act the parts of father and son, which, as Foli was very tall, with a deep bass speaking (as well as singing) voice, and I was short and rather young-looking, fitted us fairly well.

On entering the shop the following dialogue took place :

Foli. What about that placard in the window? Is the situation still vacant?

Proprietor. Yes.

Foli. I should like my boy to have it.

PROPRIETOR. Has he ever been in a situation before?

FOLI. No; but he is a sharp boy, and can easily learn the duties.

PROPRIETOR. I should want him to sweep the shop, clean the windows and my boots, and run errands.

FOLI. How much will you pay him?

PROPRIETOR. Half a crown a week and his meals.

FOLI. All right. Done!

So I was engaged at the above princely salary and was to commence my duties the following day. Needless to say that by the appointed time we were already many miles away. I have often wondered what that man must have thought if by any chance he went to the concert and saw his new errand boy sitting at the piano in full evening attire.

Speaking of Foli reminds me of another rather amusing incident. One night he and I were returning from Dublin, and on landing at Holyhead, after a stormy passage, we got into an empty railway compartment, and proceeded to lay ourselves down at full length, thinking to get a nice comfortable sleep all the way to London. What was our disgust when at the last moment another man jumped in, attended by numerous portmanteaux, parcels, rugs, etc., and thus obliged us to give up half the carriage to him. Balked of our happy intention, we began (in Italian) to abuse him right and left, and to make use of every swear-word and epithet we could possibly think of—and the Italian

language is not badly off in this respect. After about half an hour, by which time we had pretty well exhausted our anger and the vocabulary, he calmly turned to us with a bland smile and remarked, also in Italian: "I understand every word you have been saying." Of course an apology would scarcely have improved matters, so all we could do was to keep our mouths tightly shut for the rest of the journey, and content ourselves with what sleep we could get in a sitting posture.

Another time I came very near to spoiling (literally) the public appearance of one of my colleagues, a baritone named Del Puente. I was drinking some stout in the artist's room just before the concert, and as I put the glass to my lips, something he said to me so tickled my sense of humour that suddenly, and almost before I was aware of it, he received a small shower-bath of the frothing liquid right in the centre of his hitherto spotless shirt. As he had to appear almost at once, there was no time for him to return to the hotel to change, so with the aid of some chalk and a handkerchief we managed to turn the blemished garment from a blackish-brown to a nice *café-au-lait* colour, which was the best we could do for him. But I am sadly afraid the audience must have noticed that something was wrong!

An interesting and possibly unique incident happened at another concert—I think, in Newcastle. Teresa Carreño, then a young girl just

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beginning her brilliant career, and Tito Mattei were with us, and someone suggested that as a novelty we should play a trio for three pianofortes. We knew of no piece quite suitable to our purpose, so the idea occurred to us to compose something specially for the occasion. The concert was to take place the same evening, and as soon as we had swallowed breakfast, we hastened to the music shop, engaged three instruments, and sat down to collect our thoughts. We took some themes from Verdi's "Rigoletto" as our basis, around which we composed a fantasia, Carreño inventing here and there a passage or variation, Mattei another, and I a third, until after a couple of hours' work we had the whole thing cut and dried. Of course there was no time to write the piece down, so we simply committed it to memory and played it in the evening for the first and only time with great success.

We always looked forward eagerly to the week or ten days we spent in Ireland, for the audiences were so amusing, especially in the south. The concerts as well as the operatic performances were usually given in the theatre, and the gods in the gallery used to enliven the whole evening with their funny sayings and doings. Before the curtain drew up they sang the National Anthem, "The Wearing of the Green," and any familiar airs they could think of; then all throughout the performance they would send little paper darts flying all over the theatre, looking in the semi-darkness like so many shooting stars, and which often came into

contact with some unoffending individual in the stalls or boxes. Their remarks, too, and the nicknames they invented for the artists were, if to the point, not always very polite.

For instance, we had with us on one tour a rather swarthy-looking baritone, named Agnesi. As soon as he appeared they christened him King Coffee (it was about the time of the Ashantee War), and whenever he came on the stage they would call out, "Here comes King Coffee! or "Bravo, Coffee!" much to the diversion of the rest of the audience, and to his own embarrassment.

One evening, when the tenor appeared as Edgardo in "Lucia," in the absurd conventional velvet jacket, and loose white garments in place of a waistcoat, some facetious person remarked in a loud voice, "Plase, Misther Campaneeni, your shirrt's hanging out!" Again, in the second act of "Fra Diavolo," when the soprano had divested herself of the customary one or two articles of clothing prior to getting into bed, a frightened voice was heard from above, "Oi say, miss, don't you think its toime to stop?"

During any opera, if it so pleased them, they would stop the *prima donna* and make her sing one of their favourite songs, like "The last rose of summer," or "The minstrel boy," or both; and the performance would not be allowed to continue until she had complied with their demand. In some of the smaller towns we, on our part, were as indifferent to the proprieties as they were. Once—I think it was in Limerick—several of us went to

the music shop on the day of the concert, procured some of the long advertising slips with To-Night printed on them in large letters, fastened them on to our backs, and paraded the town in the capacity of our own sandwich-men.

Everyone knows how amusing the jarveys in Dublin are. I took a jaunting car to the theatre one night, and on arrival told the driver to come back for me after the performance. "What name, sorr?" he asked. I gave him my name. Then he said, "And how the divil does your honour spell it?" I spelt it for him. "Faith, it isn't by any manes an aisy name, sorr!" "Perhaps you would prefer O'Brien," I said. "Shure, I would that, sorr!" "All right," I answered, "call me O'Brien." So under this novel appellation I had no difficulty in finding my car when the concert was over, and I went by the name of O'Brien for the rest of the tour.

As for practical jokes, their name was legion. One of the most amusing was the following: We had with us once a tenor of the name of Brignoli. He was past middle age and not at all handsome; but he was very spruce, and fancied himself immensely. This did not concern us much, but what did concern us was that he thought himself a great lady-killer, and was for ever boring us with accounts of his many conquests. We stood it as long as we could, but at last we made up our minds to have our little revenge, and to give him a gentle hint that we had had enough of his boasting. So one morning some of us went out and bought the

photograph of the prettiest girl we could find; this we enclosed in a letter (written by the young lady in the hotel office at our dictation) to the effect that the writer had heard him sing, had fallen desperately in love with him, etc., and begged him to meet her at three o'clock the next day on the principal platform of the railway-station. The letter was duly posted, and we set ourselves to watch the progress of events.

After regaling himself with a sumptuous lunch and a bottle of champagne (this we were told), we saw him issue forth from the hotel punctually at 2.30, dressed in his very best style, with newly waxed moustache, white kid gloves, and flower in his button-hole; then, entering the carriage and pair he had specially ordered for the occasion, he drove off to the station. We followed as closely as we dared, and from a convenient hiding-place we heard him ask the porters in his broken English, "Vich is dee principalee platformee?" Having found it, he paced anxiously up and down for over an hour, of course with no result, and was obliged at length to return disconsolately to the hotel. Whether he ever suspected us, I cannot say, but at all events, he took the hint and never bothered us again with his adventures.

Another tenor also fell a victim to our pleasant little ways. He said one afternoon that he had a cold (a not unusual excuse among tenors) and could not sing that evening. We thought we would try to cure it for him. So we went to every chemist shop in the town, bought inhalers, eucalyptus, men-

thol, camphor, and every other concoction we could think of, and had them sent to the hotel in his name, mentioning, by the way, that as he was a very obstinate man and objected strongly to be dosed, the doctor had ordered the medicines for him without his knowledge, and had told us that we were to be sure and see that he had them; therefore they were on no account to be taken back. When the packages arrived—and there were a goodly number of them—he, of course, said they were not for him, and tried to explain to the messengers, by signs and gesticulations, that they could leave them if they liked, but that he was not going to pay for them. We had foreseen this, and the next morning at the railway-station (by arrangement with us) he was met by the chemists' assistants with their various little bills, amounting in all, I think, to about a sovereign, and after pretended threats of police detention on their part, and much bad language in Italian on his, he was finally obliged to stump up. He sang the next evening as well as ever, and had no more colds during the tour.

A practical joke of a different sort was played on myself. I had to attend an operatic performance in which some of my female colleagues staying in the hotel were not required. Having nothing better to do with their time, they betook themselves to my room in my absence, ransacked my cupboards and trunks, which I had unluckily left open, and sewed up the extremities of nearly every garment I possessed. (It must have taken them

two or three hours.) For weeks afterwards I was constantly shoving my arms into sleeves that had no exit, or extricating myself from impossible knots and other entanglements. I said nothing about it for some time, which doubtless was a great disappointment to them, but about a fortnight later, while out driving one fine afternoon, I ostentatiously produced a brand new pair of gloves, and proceeded to put them on, accompanied by roars of laughter from my companions ; and no wonder, for I found that every finger had been carefully sewn up in the same way as all my other things. Of course, I could no longer pretend ignorance of the joke they had played on me.

We stayed on one occasion in an old hotel that was supposed to be haunted. It was a weird sort of place, with oak-lined walls, hidden recesses, dark corners, etc., such as ghosts so dearly love. The ladies of our party were rather frightened when it was time to go to bed, but they were more so later, when, between twelve and one o'clock, some of us crept along the corridors, making low, unearthly moans, scratching stealthily at their doors, and putting sulphurous matches into the keyholes. One of them was so overcome (she was all right again the next morning) that she rang her bell violently and woke up the whole household, but by the time help arrived, we were safely ensconced in our own rooms, feeling that we had done our share of the night's entertainment.

While on the subject of ghosts, I will relate a strange incident that happened some little while

ago, and the truth of which is vouched for by the person who told it to me.

A young lady was engaged to be married, and went to a photographer to have her portrait taken as a gift to her fiancé. She waited two or three weeks for the proofs; then, as they did not arrive, she wrote to the photographer asking why he had not sent them. He replied that he had not done so because in developing the negative something very extraordinary had occurred, which she could see for herself if she liked to call. Her curiosity being aroused, she went to the studio, and the proofs were shown to her. *Behind her chair there stood the shadow of the young man to whom she was betrothed holding a dagger over her head in a menacing attitude.*

Thinking that this was possibly only some flaw in the camera, or some unaccountable effect of light and shade, she sat again to the photographer, who this time used a different lens. *The figure appeared again just as in the first picture.*

There could be no question now of any trickery, and the strange occurrence so preyed on the young lady's mind that before long the engagement was broken off.

Whether it was really a supernatural warning to her or not, I leave to be determined by others more versed in spirits and their doings than I am; but I give the story as it was told to me.

The list of my other artist companions on these tours is too numerous for me to do more than just mention a few of them. The most important,

besides Titiens, were Zelie Trebelli (of whom I shall have more to say in another chapter), Sinico, Marie Roze, Ilma di Murzka; the tenors Campanini and Mongini, Jean de Reszke (then a young *baritone*, with no presentiment of his future celebrity as a tenor); De Swert, the 'cellist, and Ovide Musin, the violinist.

Musin and I were special friends. He was, and probably still is, a brilliant executant of the lighter school, with a sweet tone and plenty of fire; at the same time he was a lively, good-natured young fellow, with just a little of the devil in him, all of which made him an excellent companion; and many were the pleasant times we had together. I stayed with him once at his home in Liège, and I remember well an amusing scene that happened there in which he played the chief rôle. We went one very cold evening to a friend's house. The snow was deep on the ground, and just to make ourselves thoroughly warm and comfortable before leaving, we spent the last two or three hours in sampling some of the friend's Burgundy (they are famous for it in Liège). There was nothing serious the matter with Musin—it must have been the heat of the room—but on going out into the street he took off his hat and overcoat. When we told him he would catch cold, he only replied: "J'ai tellement chaud!" Then, a minute or two later, he took off his boots, and proceeded to walk in his stockinged feet, and on our again remonstrating with him, he gave us the same answer: "J'ai tellement chaud!" Then he sat down in the snow in the middle of the road,

and refused to go any farther. At last, after many attempts to persuade him that he would be much cooler in bed, he consented to try it, and we went home, two of us taking his arm, just for the sake of companionship. There was nothing serious the matter with him, but they do keep their rooms so warm in Liège! (N.B.—If he should ever see this, I am sure he will forgive me, and be himself the first to laugh at the recollection.)

CHAPTER IV

Sir Michael Costa—My father's death—My position at the opera given up—Arthur Sullivan—Sims Reeves—Davison the critic—Joseph Bennett—My second symphony at the Liverpool Philharmonic—First acquaintance with Albani—"The Better Land"—Christine Nilsson—Robert Francillon and his humorous poem—Railway accident on tour with Nilsson.

It may be gathered from the preceding chapter that we spent our time on these tours very happily, if not very profitably. But in London during the opera season we had to be serious, and especially so in the theatre, where Costa's watchful eye was always on us. Sir Michael ruled everyone with a rod, or rather, bâton of iron. He was scarcely what one would call a genial man, but he was very just, and of a not unkindly nature at heart, though he usually hid it under an abrupt and far from prepossessing manner, which made us all very frightened of him. One day at rehearsal, after I had been waiting about on the stage for some time to know if I had any duties to perform, I went up to him and asked him if there was anything he wished me to do, to which he replied in a loud angry voice, his eyelids twitching nervously, as they always did: "Yes; go home and work, and don't stop idling your time here!" But he could

unbend at times, and I remember quite a pleasant chat I had with him at his own house, in the course of which he told me some of his early experiences, and took out of a drawer a card with some tiny toy razors on it that had been sent to him satirically when, as a beardless youth, he first stepped into the conductor's seat at the opera. That he had treasured these for nearly fifty years showed that he was not entirely without sentiment or humour. It was also to him that I owed my first important festival commission—*i.e.*, my cantata, "The Corsair," produced at Birmingham in 1876.

To show how punctilious and practical he was in everything, I had put on a pair of black gloves for the occasion, being in mourning for my father, and happening to catch sight of me just as I was going on to the platform, he made me take them off again, saying that the choir would not be able to follow my movements distinctly at such a distance, and that if I possessed no other gloves, I had better conduct without any at all, which advice I followed.

At that time it was a very unusual thing for a conductor to be seen with uncovered hands, but nowadays the fashion has been very generally adopted, with, I must say, much less cramping of the wrist and fingers, and much less expense to the pocket.

After about seven years of this kind of life I gave up my connection with the opera. My father had died a year or two before, and I no longer had his influence and guidance to help me towards what was then the goal of my ambition.

I had always had the desire to become an operatic conductor, and had worked on with the hope of some day being promoted to that position, but Mapleson always put me off with some excuse or other.

He used to say to me : "You are too young, my boy. Wait until you're bald, then we'll talk about it." I soon fulfilled my part of this injunction, but he did not fulfil his, so my chance never came, and my ambition in this respect has remained unrealized up to the present day. However, I gained much useful knowledge and experience in operatic matters, and feel that I am well equipped for the post in case operas are the fashion in other spheres, and there should be any bands of harps and trumpets waiting to be conducted.

Outside the theatre my career (just then beginning) brought me into touch and personal friendship with most of the chief musical people of the day. Besides those already mentioned in previous chapters, there were, among the composers, George Macfarren, Arthur Sullivan, and Fred Clay (Balfe was just a little before this time, and I never knew him, though I remember the production of his "Puritan's Daughter," with Louisa Pyne and Harrison, and of the "Talisman" at Drury Lane) ; among the concert singers Sainton Dolby, Lemmens Sherrington, Janet Patey, Sims Reeves, and Santley ; and among the critics, Davison and Bennett. Sullivan, some years older than myself, was already a popular composer, but he was not above associating with his aspiring young colleague,

and we met very often, not only then, but throughout all the following years.

It is almost superfluous for me to say what everyone knows—that he could be a charming companion when he liked, full of wit and animation; qualities to which he doubtless owed much of his social success. As a musician his versatility was almost unique, and his gift of spontaneous melody one that many another composer might covet, even in these progressive times, when to be melodious is to be considered conventional and old-fashioned.

What appealed to me in Sims Reeves was not so much the voice itself as its carrying power, and his wonderful enunciation which caused every note and word, even when whispered, to be heard distinctly all over the largest building. One could always understand what he was singing about. Not like a certain other artist of the time (it is true she was German) who invariably turned the words of Mendelssohn's "Oh! for the wings of a dove," into "Oh! for-ty winks, for-ty winks." Reeves never went to a concert without being attended by a suite consisting of his wife, daughters, sons, and valet. Agreeable as all these were in themselves, I cannot but think that their constant solicitude rather increased than lessened his habitual nervousness and disinclination to appear before the public, and that he would have been better left to himself.

Davison the critic I used to meet often at a tavern called the Albion, near Drury Lane (now done away with), whither many of us were in the habit of repairing after the opera. He always

occupied the same little wooden pen or division, and would sit there chatting with his chosen companions well into the small hours (before the Licensing Act) and, indeed, until he could get no one to sit up and talk with him any longer, when he would go, or sometimes be carried, home. He was a great power on the Press in the days when there were fewer newspapers and consequently fewer critics, but he did not always use this power for good.

Arabella Goddard, the pianist, being his wife, he was often prejudiced against other pianists, as he also was against the music of Schumann and other composers, whose reputations in this country he retarded for a long time. But if he was sometimes malicious, he could also praise when he thought the occasion warranted it, and he always wrote in a fluent and masterly style. *Au fond* he was, I think, a warm-hearted man and stanch to his friends in private life, even though he might on occasion be too lazy to criticize them publicly. When I produced my Scandinavian symphony, I received an enthusiastic letter from him in which he said: "You see, I was right about your symphony, and I congratulate you with all my heart. . . . The work has *made you* —placed you, in fact, in your proper position, and all the time you may have spent upon it has been right well spent. Go on in the same path and prosper." Of course, after this I expected a glowing notice in the paper, but as far as I know no notice, glowing or otherwise, was ever forthcoming—which was characteristic of his nature. Still, when he did take the trouble to write about me, he treated me

as leniently as I deserved, and my recollections of him in this, as in all other respects, are nothing but pleasant ones.

Of Joseph Bennett, so recently gone from among us, and of our long friendship, it would be out of place for me to write in these pages. I will only say that if his conservatism in art and his inability to easily adapt himself to the trend of modern music may be open to question, at least no one can deny him the great abilities he possessed as a writer, not only on music, but on many other subjects, nor the charm of personality which endeared him to all those who, like myself, knew him well.

Although my association with the opera during these years kept me fairly well occupied, I still had plenty of time in which to do other work. I played at a number of concerts, and produced several compositions, amongst them, the music to "The Maid of Orleans"; a second symphony, "The Corsair"; an opera, "Pauline"; and an oratorio, "The Deluge." "The Maid of Orleans" music is only valued in my memory because it was the first Festival commission I ever received. It was performed at one of the Brighton festivals then being given by Wilhelm Kuhe, whose friendship for, and interest in, me never abated from that time to the end of his long life. The symphony, likewise, is chiefly connected in my mind with the fact that at the concert where it was produced (the Liverpool Philharmonic) I made the acquaintance of Emma Albani, then a young artist fresh from her first London success.

All these works died an early death, and are buried either in the mausoleum of my cupboards, or in the deep recesses of the publishers' shelves, from which they are never likely to be resuscitated.

I also had the misfortune about this time to write a song for Antoinette Sterling, called "The Better Land." I say misfortune, not because it was written for her, but because, having once given it life, it has, like a Frankenstein monster, haunted me ever since. It has followed me everywhere, cropping up at all sorts of inopportune moments, and in all sorts of unexpected places. When I have wanted to be quiet, a cornet has played it in the street. When I have thought to read a nice eulogium on myself in the papers, it has been the chief topic of the article. When I have made a new acquaintance, feeling perhaps rather proud of some recent composition, I have been introduced as the composer of it! And to add to my injuries, while the fiend was still in his infancy, I parted with his copyright! Over this last circumstance I ought, perhaps, not to grumble, as I received three hundred pounds for the song—not a bad sum for about an hour's work—but I ought to have guessed that if Boosey thought well enough of the composition to buy all my rights in it, I should do better to keep them, and this indeed would have been the case to the tune of several thousand pounds!

While on this subject I cannot refrain from quoting part of an amusing letter I once received. The writer, after alluding to a poem he sent me on the death of Queen Victoria, concluded his letter

as follows: "I have the liveliest recollection of hearing your 'Better Land' sung for the first time. . . . I have written a great number of spiritual songs, and I should so much like the good Dr. Cowen" (how he knew I was good I cannot say) "to set one or two of them to music before he himself goes to that Better Land, where I shall hope to join both the author and composer of that beautiful song when my work is done."

His idea of future happiness in the society of Mrs. Hemans and myself—a sort of artistic trinity —was certainly very flattering, and I am curious to know whether he has already realized two-thirds of his desire, and is now patiently waiting for me for the other third.

I must not forget to mention three or four other stars that shone brightly in the operatic firmament at the period I have been writing about.

Earliest among these was Pauline Lucca, one of the most gifted sopranos of her time, whose great versatility was shown in her impersonation of such widely opposed characters as Selika ("L'Africaine"), and Cherubino ("Nozze di Figaro"), Aida and Zerlina ("Fra Diavolo"), in all of which she was equally artistic and charming. Then there was the great baritone Faure, as fine an actor as he was a singer. Later came Etelka Gerster, with her extraordinary vocalization and dramatic talent; and last, but certainly not least, there was Christine Nilsson.

We used to have wonderful casts in those days. During the coalition seasons of Gye and Mapleson

at Covent Garden (1869-70) I remember hearing "Don Giovanni" with Titiens as Donna Anna, Nilsson as Donna Elvira, Patti as Zerlina, Faure as the Don, and, I think, Ciampi as Leporello (I am not sure who the tenor was); also "Le Nozze di Figaro" with Titiens as the Countess, Sinico as Suzanna, Santley as Almaviva, and Nilsson as Cherubino. Such an array of distinguished artists in one opera would be difficult, I might almost say, impossible, to obtain nowadays.

What a delightful singer Nilsson was! Her Marguerite and Mignon were, I think, the most ideal interpretations of these parts, both vocally and physically, I have ever known.

Socially she was rather reserved and difficult to approach, but this manner wore off when one became well acquainted with her, and she could then be very affable and charming.

She asked me to compose a song for her for a concert at the Albert Hall at which she was going to sing, and I applied to my literary friend Robert Francillon (the author of the words of several of my songs and of the cantatas, "The Rose Maiden," "The Corsair," and "St. Ursula") to write me a pretty lyric for the occasion. On receipt of my request he sent me the following poetical reply, containing, I ought to explain, allusions to several ballads that were more or less popular about this time.

"When I survey the glorious scene
A Ballad Concert shows—
The singers dressed in pink or green,
The audience all in rows—

To write a song I burn to try,
A song—oh, pride to tell!
For Boosey's customers to buy,
And Boosey's self to sell.

And now I've got to do the trick
Without a fear at all,
That Fred won't find a tune to tick-
Le up the Albert Hall.

"Yes, I have got to write a song;
At least, I've promised to.
They tell me it must not be long,
Or else it will not do.
In just two stanzas there must be
A little story jammed,
Or else 'twill never sell, you see,
And surely will be d——d.

And oh, a short refrain must come
With sentimental tears,
For Fred to make a tune to hum,
And tickle people's ears.

"'Why?' has been asked to death, I find;
And emptied is the theme
Of Babies troubled with the wind,
And things that were a dream.
The publishers their counters cram
With Pigeons by the load;
If half a subject's left, I am—
To put it meekly—blowed.

Yet oh, a subject very soon
Is wanted, woe is me!
For Fred to tickle with a tune
The ears of 'General P.'

(Who's 'General P.'? Why 'General P.'
Is 'General Public'—don't you see?)

"Were I that mighty minstrel who
To bed did Lily pack,
Or told us Doves are fair—as though
A jackass thought them black—
Then were I not in this sad fix,
And light would be the toil
To please the man that finds the sticks
That make the pot to boil.

And Boosey is his noble name,
And gladly would I know
The way to get but half the fame
Of those 'Long 'Ears ago.'

"Yet if I mind the grand receipt
For making ballads do—
The little story, and the neat
Refrain, in stanzas two—
Perhaps I can't go very wrong,
Although of thoughts I'm bare,
If Nilsson will but sing the song,
And Cowen write the air.

Oh, popular would even be
In hands like theirs, I vow,
The words of that wild melody
That killed an aged cow."

For some reason or other, however, the "stanzas two" he promised were not forthcoming, or if they were, I did not find them suitable, for the song was never composed.

Nilsson and I were once together in a railway accident. It was during a concert tour—the only one, I believe, she ever made in this country—and we were all travelling down to Plymouth by the night express. The workmen had been doing some repairs, and had left a number of large sleepers along the permanent way; during the night floods had risen suddenly, washed these sleepers across the line, and then partially subsided. Into this we dashed at the rate of sixty miles an hour. Most of us were asleep, and the first thing we knew, or rather felt, was a series of severe blows on our heads from falling trunks, hat boxes, etc., which led us to conclude that things were not quite as they should be. Then ensued a tremendous rocking and shaking, followed by cries from various

members of our party: "We are off the rails!" "Keep still!" "Put your feet on the opposite cushion!" "Get into the rack!" Fortunately our fear and excitement did not last very long. The foot or more of water on the line had reached the engine boiler and put the fire out, and after two or three minutes (it seemed like eternity to us) we came to a standstill. We all got out and walked to a little station a few hundred yards away, where we found everything in total darkness. However, we succeeded after a little while in rousing the station-master, and when we had calmed down somewhat proceeded to hunt for food. In this we were unsuccessful, and were beginning to despair when Nilsson suddenly remembered that she had a basket with her. So one of us was sent to fetch it, and we regaled ourselves at intervals with cold chicken and tongue and champagne and other delicacies, until our long wait of four or five hours was over, and another engine arrived to take us to our destination. It was one of the nicest impromptu suppers I have ever had!

CHAPTER V

My first visit to Switzerland—Liszt in Weimar—Lord Dudley—Recollections of my visits to his country seats—The Duke of Edinburgh and Norman Neruda—My stay in Milan—Rubinstein—"The Deluge" at Brighton—Gustave Doré—Prince Albert of Solms—Trip to America—Meeting with Longfellow—Opening of the Shakespeare Memorial at Stratford—The Bohemian Club.

In 1872 (to go back a little) I took my first holiday in the Alps, and was initiated into the fascinations of mountain climbing. In those days Switzerland was not so overrun as it is now ; cheap touring had hardly begun ; there were no mountain railways, no picnickers on the highest summits ; the hotels were not always crowded, and in consequence the proprietors thereof were glad to see you and to make you comfortable. Here I may say that I am very selfish in the mountains, and like to have my view to myself, undisturbed by the noise of irreverent chatterers and the sight of paper bags and bottles. I had to make my excursions either on foot or by diligence, and very enjoyable they were. So was the arrival in the late afternoon at some little inn at the top of the pass, where, after a good meal, a half-dozen of us would sit round a blazing fire in company with the landlord himself, and discuss over a pipe our adventures

of the day or our plans for the next—a happy custom, alas! long out of fashion, and the remembrance of which makes one regret the obtrusive march of civilization. Of course, I went up the Rigi to see the sun rise, and equally, of course, I didn't see it. Here, as an exception, the hotel *was* full, so much so that they had to turn the servants out of their room and put some of us into it.

N.B.—Though the servants went, they forgot to take all their "belongings" with them, so our night was far from a restful one!

I also had my first introduction to the high peaks with their glaciers, and I shall never forget the impression these mighty giants made upon me when actually in their midst—the silence and solitude of it all, the overpowering grandeur, the sense of my absolute nothingness, that they produced in me. Surely there is nought else—no music, no picture, no sermon—that can so set us musing on the mystery of our being, or can so forcibly inspire us with a belief in a Higher Power.

The sport of climbing may be in itself a very exhilarating one, but I always think that the real fascination of the mountains, to those at least who are at all imaginative, rests in the power they have of rousing such impressions as I have described—impressions which no amount of familiarity with these higher regions can lessen or stale.

I have often wondered how it is that Switzerland has never produced any really great artists. One would imagine that, surrounded as the people are by all that is most sublime in Nature, they would

have been inspired to put forth their loftiest thoughts in words, or song, or colour. It may be that they have been unconsciously overpowered by this very grandeur, and felt the impossibility of ever hoping to rival it in art; or perhaps their many strenuous struggles for freedom in earlier times, and more recently the building of their railways and hotels and the making of money, have left them no leisure to think of anything else.

A visit to Weimar in the autumn of the same year gave me the opportunity of meeting Liszt, who was then residing there.

I did not take the usual couple of lessons from him — which many pianists thought sufficient to entitle them to be styled his pupils, but he was good enough to play to me once or twice, and also to let me play duets with him, both of which I much appreciated.

He had long since given up performing in public, but, judging from what I heard then, and on his subsequent visit to London, he must certainly have been a great pianist, with wonderful technique and nobility of style, if perhaps somewhat lacking in those emotional and moving qualities which Rubinstein, for instance, possessed to such a remarkable extent. His character impressed me as that of a man who, aware of his immense popularity, accepted adulation almost as a matter of course, yet never disdaining to exercise his natural charm of manner, even on those who were of small account to him, in order to gain fresh admirers. He was highly cultured, an interesting conversationalist,

and, as I have hinted, of a kindly and gracious disposition. He was far from good-looking, but one forgot this in the intellectuality of his features, to which his long white hair and abbé's garb lent an additional attraction. His was indeed one of the most striking personalities of his time, and this, together with his courteous and agreeable manner and the halo that surrounded him as an artist, went far to account for the wonderful fascination he had over everyone around him, and particularly over the fair sex. Even in his later days, when I knew him, he never walked in the streets or went into society without being followed or surrounded by a bevy of female worshippers.

This universal admiration would make one inclined to doubt the truth of the following little anecdote that has been told about him : He was invited out to dinner one evening—so it is said—and not expecting a large gathering, he arrived in his ordinary morning attire. On receiving a hint from his hostess that he should have appeared in evening dress, he returned home, and wrapping up his dress coat, he sent it to her by his servant with a note to the effect that " if it was his coat she wanted and not himself, there it was !" I am afraid I do not believe this story, any more than I believe that other one about Mario, who being asked to sing after a dinner party at some great lady's house, gave his audience one verse of a song and then stopped ; and on receiving a request from his hostess to sing the other verse, replied " Mais, Madame, j'ai si peu mangé !" Both Mario and Liszt were too well

bred, too much accustomed to move in the best social circles, to act otherwise than as became a gentleman. Personally I found Liszt most punctilious in everything, and when I called on him in Buda Pesth some years afterwards, he returned my visit immediately, almost like some royal personage conforming to the accepted usages of Court etiquette.

I must now speak about Lord Dudley, who, as I mentioned in the early pages of this book, was my great benefactor, and of whom I saw much during that period of my life, of which I am now writing.

He was a great patron of music ; one of the very few who loved it for its own sake, and who, if he had lived in Haydn's time, would probably have had an orchestra as a necessary part of his household, and musicians constantly about him. As it was, he liked nothing better than to have them come to sing and play to him as often as possible, and everyone who was of any importance in the musical world found a ready welcome at his house.

His beautiful picture gallery was an ideal place for music, and many of my earliest concerts took place there. Besides being an appreciative listener, he delighted in singing himself, and I used often to accompany him, when, just by ourselves, he would sing some old favourite of his, or I would teach him something new that he had lately heard and taken a fancy to. His voice was quite small, but what he lacked in this respect he made up for

in his enthusiasm and thorough enjoyment of the piece he was singing.

He was very tall, though an habitual stoop of the shoulders took away somewhat from his height; not really handsome, but with a pretty mouth and teeth and a charming expression when he smiled. He wore long hair combed over his ears, which made him look rather singular, and gave rise to the rumour that these aural appendages were missing altogether—only one of a number of rumours that were constantly in circulation about his peculiarities and eccentricities. I must confess, though, that in all my intercourse with him I never saw any signs of his being at all eccentric, unless unpunctuality in keeping an appointment or getting up at twelve o'clock can be so called; in which case many of us have the former eccentricity largely developed, and as to the latter, we would very often indulge in it, too, if we could. He was a good shot, both with the gun and rifle, and a billiard player far above the ordinary average of the amateur.

I used often to go with him and his charming consort—then undoubtedly the most beautiful woman in England—to his country seat in Worcestershire or to his shooting-box in Scotland, and have many happy recollections of these visits, when the days passed all too quickly and pleasantly. The mornings would be spent in shooting—at least my part of this was done, like Mark Twain's climbing, by proxy (I have never shot with anything more deadly than a pop-gun), but I liked watching the others, and especially young Lord de Grey, who was

even then one of the best shots in the kingdom, and at whose side I used to remain as often as possible, admiring his wonderful skill in taking four birds out of the same flight with two guns—a feat that he often accomplished.

In the late afternoons we would have tea and music, which gave the men of the party the opportunity of putting on elaborate velvet smoking-suits of all colours, a pretty but expensive fashion of the time.

Then, after dinner, we had either more music, or a game of whist, or perhaps an impromptu dance; and when all the rest had retired for the night, Lord Dudley would make me sit up with him and play chess, until I used to get so sleepy that I could not distinguish a knight from a bishop, and made as many bad moves as I could, so that he might win the game quickly (he was in any case a much better player than myself) and let me go to bed.

If it was midwinter we sometimes went skating on the lake, or amused ourselves by building snow-men. One Christmas I remember we nearly had a serious tragedy. There was a Christmas-tree to please the little children, and Gilbert Claughton, Lord Dudley's nephew, who was impersonating Santa Claus, accidentally came too near to one of the lighted candles, with the result that his cotton-wool beard caught fire and blazed up in an instant. Luckily, someone had the presence of mind to smother him in a cushion, and thus extinguish the flames, and he escaped with a few burns on his head and face; but he was, of course, incapacitated

from any further performances that evening, and our festivities came to an abrupt termination. These visits naturally brought me into association with many people, distinguished alike in social and artistic circles, and amongst whom I formed several good friendships.

One who was very congenial to me was the late Lord Dupplin ("Duppy," as he was called by his intimates), whose natural musical gifts, particularly in the art of extemporizing, were for an amateur quite exceptional.

Another was Lord Rosslyn, himself a poet of no mean order, and at whose house I afterwards met Lord Beaconsfield and Tennyson, for the first and only time.

A very amusing man was Alfred Montgomery. He possessed a great gift of making impromptu witty remarks, the effect of which was still further enhanced by a slight impediment he had in his speech. Once, when some of the guests at table were speaking about a fishing-village inn where they had stayed, and saying that they had been unable to sleep comfortably on account of certain little unpleasant bed-fellows, another of the party remarked that *he* had not suffered any discomfort, but on the contrary had had a very good night's rest. Upon which Montgomery said: "My dear f-fellow, you kn-now, even b—gs m-m-must draw the l-line somewhere!" Norman Neruda (Lady Hallé) and Tosti (not long arrived in England) were also frequent guests of Lord Dudley, and I remember one evening, when the Duke of Edinburgh was present, that the

former showed us a beautiful violin she was anxious to purchase, but which she could not well afford, and that after many hints and innuendoes on her part, coupled with sly allusions to His Royal Highness's knowledge of a good instrument, he was induced to offer it to her as a present, which gracious offer I need hardly say was accepted with much gratitude.

The Duke himself, as we of the older generation know, was very fond of playing the violin, and I used often to accompany him in private, when he played the obbligato part to some well-known singer in Gounod's "Ave Maria"—one of his favourite pieces.

These were very pleasant times, and I was indeed sorry when, owing to Lord Dudley's long illness and death, they were brought to an end. He was always a kind and generous friend, and his loss came as a great sorrow to me.

Like all other artists, it was the dream of my youth to see Italy. In the autumn of 1873, having two or three months of freedom from my duties at the opera, I thought I would take advantage of an opportunity that might not come again for a long while, and bring my great desire to its realization. The ostensible excuse for my going was to obtain an Italian libretto for an opera, of which I shall say more farther on. Ever since I began my career I had always had a wish to write for the stage. Except for my very juvenile effort "Garibaldi," my only attempt at this form of my

art had been an Italian operetta undertaken the previous year at Mapleson's request. The chief character in it was an artist who fell in love with the picture of a young girl he was painting, which damsel, while he slept, became suddenly animated, walked out of the canvas, and began dancing. I do not recollect how it ended, for I had not long started on the composition when I seemed to have a vague idea that I had heard, or read, of a similar story somewhere, only it was about a Greek sculptor, and the young lady in it did not indulge in terpsichorean performances. This may have been only my fancy, but in any case the doings of my young couple did not particularly inspire me, so, after writing one or two numbers, I put the work aside.

But although, as I have said, I certainly was anxious to try my hand at serious opera and procure a good libretto, my chief reason for visiting Italy was to make acquaintance with this land of my dreams, and to see with my own eyes some at least of the beauties and treasures about which I had read and heard so much. I am afraid I did little or no work during my stay; I was too busy revelling in my surroundings to settle down to anything so prosiac. What need to talk of my many and varied impressions — my wonder at the marble tracery work and countless statues of Milan Cathedral, my intense enjoyment of the art treasures of Florence, my almost indescribable feelings at sight of lovely, mysterious Venice (the South I did not visit until a later occasion)? All those who see Italy for the first time must experience something of the

sort, and it may be readily understood that for a young man of twenty-one, to whom everything was novel and fresh, this was a mental feast of which I did not easily tire. I made Milan my headquarters, and the time not devoted to travelling and sight-seeing was passed in the society of friends, dining out, going to the opera or theatre, and other such social recreations. One of my favourite places of amusement was the Marionette Theatre, much frequented by the Milanese themselves, but usually overlooked by visitors. I shall never forget a performance of the Passion Play I once witnessed there. On this occasion the marionettes were replaced by real people, who spoke and acted as in an ordinary theatre. Unfortunately, however, the proscenium was so small and low that the heads of the actors were hidden in the flies, and one could hardly hear what they said. Nothing daunted by this, they went through the sacred drama in all seriousness; but the audience did not seem to take it in this light, and accompanied the performance with running comments, which, though very apposite, were rather disconcerting. For instance, when Pilate remarked that "he washed his hands of the whole business," they responded, "Bring him some hot water!" and when the curtain drew up on the scene of the Lord's Supper, they called out "Buon appetito!" This sort of thing went on throughout the whole evening, and to add to the incongruousness of it all, there was an orchestra, consisting of a piano, a violin, and a cornet, which played waltzes and polkas between the various scenes, of which there were a large

number. I am afraid I rather reversed the order of the saying, "Fools who came to scoff," etc.; I went to pray, and remained, perhaps, not exactly to scoff, but, well, many times I had to put my head in my hands seemingly in the act of devotion, but in reality nearly bursting my sides with laughter. Certainly the Italians, outwardly at all events, are not a reverent people.

The only circumstance of real musical interest to myself during my visit to Milan was my first meeting with Rubinstein. He was making a professional tour through Italy, and it was at a dinner given by Mme. Lucca, the widow of the music publisher, that I made his acquaintance. He at once captivated me by his wonderful Beethovenish appearance, his simple nature and unspoilt manner, almost as much as he did afterwards by his playing. And what a pianist he was! With all due admiration for his many distinguished confrères, I think there is no one, before or since, who has combined all the qualities of a really great pianist as he did. He could, at will, move you to tears, thrill you with emotion, or make you shiver with excitement. It was no longer a piano he played on, but an entire orchestra, in which power, sweetness, and great execution vied with each other to produce effects totally unlike the efforts of any other single instrumentalist I have ever heard. He had his moods, like all geniuses, and could sometimes even play badly (for him); but one readily forgave him this for the immense enjoyment he gave one on all other occasions. The magnetism he exercised over his

audiences was quite extraordinary, and I have seen them roused to such a pitch of excitement and enthusiasm that they could not sit still, but had perforce to rise from their seats to watch as well as listen to him. No one could help being absorbed in his performances ; indeed, he was so himself, though perhaps not to the same extent, for any extraneous sound or movement would easily upset him and break the thread of his inspiration.

I can recall one memorable afternoon at one of his recitals in the old St. James's Hall, when just as he had begun to play Chopin's Funeral March—no one ever played it like him—a post horn from a coach in Piccadilly suddenly sounded. This so disturbed him (and no wonder) that he took his hands off the piano and dashed them down again pell-mell on to the keys in a fit of rage and disgust. After a while he commenced the piece again, but the spirit of the music had left him, and for that day at least we were deprived of the beauty of his rendering.

In the early part of 1874 I returned home and resumed my work. Most of the events of the next few years I have already described, but one or two still remain to be recorded in order to complete the rough sketch I have drawn of this portion of my life.

For instance, there was the production of my oratorio, " The Deluge," at the Brighton Festival in 1878, which production I remember was accompanied by such a real deluge from the heavens that it made me think that Providence was as angry at my

daring as He was supposed to be on the great occasion which I was trying to imitate. I may add also that the work, somewhat feeble from the beginning, was unable to withstand the untoward circumstances of its birth, and the ark (*i.e.*, the Concert Hall) where it first saw the light, being, contrary to history, powerless to protect it from those other overwhelming waters of criticism, it was then and there swamped and drowned—a fate not wholly undeserved.

About this time, also, I became acquainted with two people, each very interesting in his own sphere. One of these was Gustave Doré, the celebrated illustrator and painter, who was then on a visit to London, and of whom I saw a good deal. He was a modest, unassuming man, unspoilt by his success ; and besides his own art, was also something of a musician, playing the violin, not, it is true, with any great technique, but in quite a creditable manner. It was the fashion among his colleagues to treat his art somewhat contemptuously, chiefly, I think, because he worked entirely without models ; but, nevertheless, he was undoubtedly a born artist, and in his individuality and imaginative qualities, especially as regards his illustrations, has in my opinion never since had a compeer.

The other personage was Prince Albert of Solms, a near connection of our own Royal Family, to whom he bore a strong resemblance. He, too, was very fond of music, and enjoyed keenly the little informal parties his friends used to get up,

with just one or two artists to sing or play to him. He was quite different to most other Princes of the German Court, inasmuch as he disliked ceremony of any sort; indeed, so unceremonious was he that one day, when I had invited him to lunch, he arrived about twelve o'clock from the country with his portmanteau, and surprised our servant very much by asking to be shown to a room where he could wash his hands and generally make himself tidy.

Soon after the performance of "The Deluge" came my first trip to America, for pleasure only, during which I visited many places—New York, with its even then high buildings and incessant rush and whirl; Boston, with its intellectual life and English-like appearance; Washington, with its noble Capitol; Niagara, the White Mountains, and many other interesting and beautiful spots. From the musical life of the country I also derived much pleasure, for I heard several of their fine orchestras, attended a festival at Cincinnati, and got to know some of the chief musicians, such as Theodore Thomas, Dudley Buck, Damrosch, and others. While in Boston, too, I spent a delightful afternoon with Longfellow, conversing on music and poetry and other congenial topics, and listening while he recited to me in his clear, sweet voice two or three of his poems that he thought suitable for songs, but which had never yet been set to music. I reminded him of a charming letter he had sent me when, as an audacious little boy, I asked him to write something especially for me.

Naturally, he had forgotten all about this, but *I* had not, for it had always remained in my mind as one of the most cherished recollections of my youth, and the letter was almost a sacred possession. I quote it here as an example of his kindly and thoughtful nature, even towards a mere youth of twelve, and one who, moreover, was a total stranger to him.

"My dear Musician,

"I have had the pleasure of receiving the song of your own composing" (I think it must have been one I had written to his verses "Good-night, Beloved") "which you were kind enough to send me, and have listened to it with great pleasure, and no little astonishment that it should come from so young a heart and hand! It would certainly give me much satisfaction to have any poem of mine set to such music, but I have nothing in manuscript which I wish to print, and which would be suitable for your purpose. Perhaps among my poems already published you may find something which will answer. I remain, with best wishes for your success,

"Yours truly,

"Henry W. Longfellow."

On my return to London, or it may be a little later, I joined the National Training School as conductor of the orchestral class, at which, by-the-by, Eugen d'Albert, a young pupil already endowed with exceptional gifts, used often to come and play.

I held this post until, in 1881, Sullivan retired from the directorship, and the school was given up, or, rather, merged into the present larger and more important Royal College of Music.

Yet another event, not very interesting in itself, but remembered on account of a rather humorous occurrence connected with it. This was the opening of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon. We gave a concert, under my direction, to inaugurate the building, and having nothing to do in the afternoon we, of course, went to have a look at the great poet's house. Among our party was William Shakespeare, the still popular professor of singing, and on the visitors' book being handed to us to write in, as is the custom, he signed his name in full without giving the matter a second thought. Not so some Cockney wag who was just behind, for when his turn came, regarding the whole thing as a huge joke, he thought he would go one better, and signed himself "Oliver Cromwell!" I expect those signatures are there to the present day.

On the social side of music I must just make mention of a club called the Bohemians, which existed at this time. I do this because it is the only instance I ever knew of a social gathering where all that was highest among the men of rank and fashion, all that was prominent in art, and all that was "Bohemian," used to come together in pleasant intercourse. Our periodical musical evenings were of an informal nature, but we often had the aid of a small orchestra, which was conducted in turn by some of us musicians, and sometimes even by enthu-

siastic amateurs like Lord Dunmore. We had a goodly list of celebrities of all sorts, and the aristocratic world of London was represented by such men as Lord Carrington, Lord Charles Beresford, Lord Dupplin—to name only a few—all then in their early manhood. The late King Edward (then Prince of Wales) and the Duke of Edinburgh used also to honour us occasionally with their presence, and seemed to enjoy thoroughly the unceremonious character of the entertainment.

Here I will stop for the moment. My reminiscences of this period are nearly, though not quite, at an end, for I still have to give my readers a short account of my tours in Scandinavia, which formed such a happy combination of business and pleasure, and which were indirectly the starting-point of any slight renown I may have gained as a composer of serious aims. This, however, I must reserve for another chapter.

CHAPTER VI

Trebelli—My first tour with her in Sweden and Denmark—Stockholm — King Oscar — Hospitality of the Swedes—Trebelli's hobby — First visit to Norway — Gade — Third tour in Scandinavia—Evening at the King of Denmark's summer palace.

ZELIE TREBELLI was one of the most famous contraltos of her time, as much admired on the concert platform as on the stage, and as popular in social life as either ; for she was not only an artist of the first rank, but a person of unceasing vivacity and wit, which made her excellent company.

As a vocalist she was exceedingly versatile, being equally fine in the lighter style of operatic music as in the dramatic. There was hardly an opera she had not sung, and in which she did not know everyone else's part nearly as well as her own. In proof of this, one evening when " Il Barbiere " was to be given, her husband, Bettini, was suddenly taken ill, and there being no other tenor available, she sang the part of Count Almaviva without a rehearsal—transposing a great deal of it an octave lower to suit her voice—and thus extricated the management out of what might have proved a serious dilemma.

In 1876 she received an offer to visit Scandinavia,

a part of the world where she was then only known by repute, and invited me to join her as pianist and accompanist. My appetite for travel was already whetted by my other trips to Switzerland and Italy, which, of course, had been at my own expense, so I jumped at the chance of seeing more new countries, without this time neglecting my profession, and with a substantial gain to my pocket.

We started early in March, going by sea to Hamburg, and thence via Copenhagen on to Sweden.

Our party consisted of Trebelli ; Behrens, the bass (himself half a Swede) ; Vieuxtemps, the 'cellist (brother of the celebrated violinist), and myself—just a nice little *partie carrée* of four different nationalities, which, under the circumstances, were as many as we could well manage. The journey was uneventful ; even the North Sea was unusually kind to us ; in fact, the weather was so fine that Vieuxtemps and I were able to practise some of our duets in the saloon, much to the delight of the few passengers on board, and of the Captain himself, who came in to listen to us.

On our arrival at Malmö we soon realized the advantage of having a man like Behrens with us who was used to the country and its ways, for he simply smacked all the Custom-house officials on the back, and lo ! our luggage was magically transported to the hotel without any examination. This mode of procedure he adopted on all necessary occasions —such as when the train was late, or when we wanted food where we couldn't find any, etc.—and

it generally had the desired effect. My diary and my experience tell me that the only real difference between the express and the ordinary trains in Sweden is (or used to be) that one pays extra to travel by the former—as far as speed is concerned they are about the same. They go (or used to) for five minutes, then stop for a quarter of an hour, or indeed until such time as the guard shall have told all the current news to his local friends, had something to keep out the cold, and suddenly remembered that the station he is at is not the terminus. To make up, however, for the slow pace, the carriages are very comfortable, and the buffets, when at rare intervals one comes to them, are (or used to be) excellent. No sitting down to a hurried meal, with indigestion looming in the near future, but plenty of time to saunter round the room and help oneself to a variety of tempting dishes, and then, if one knows the ropes, to steal into a corner, under the bar keeper's very nose, and from a hidden cupboard, extract a glass of *Schnapps*, which the law does not allow one to pay for. Quite a happy notion, is it not?

To return to Malmö. We gave two very successful concerts there, and then visited many of the smaller places — the university town of Lund, Wexiö (where Christine Nilsson was born), Jönköping (where the first cheap matches came from), and others. After that we went to Denmark, giving several concerts in Copenhagen and one in Helsingör —where we walked on the ramparts and thought of Hamlet's father and his ghostly nocturnal prom-

enades—then back to Sweden, and finally, by way of Gothenberg, on to Stockholm.

Many of these concerts were got up for us by private individuals; for, except in the larger cities, there was no music-seller or agent who could make the necessary preliminary arrangements.

Trebelli's appearances were a round of triumphs everywhere she went, and the concerts were invariably crowded. In some of the very small towns the people shut their shops so as to be able to go and hear her, which, as all their customers were there too, did not matter much from a business point of view.

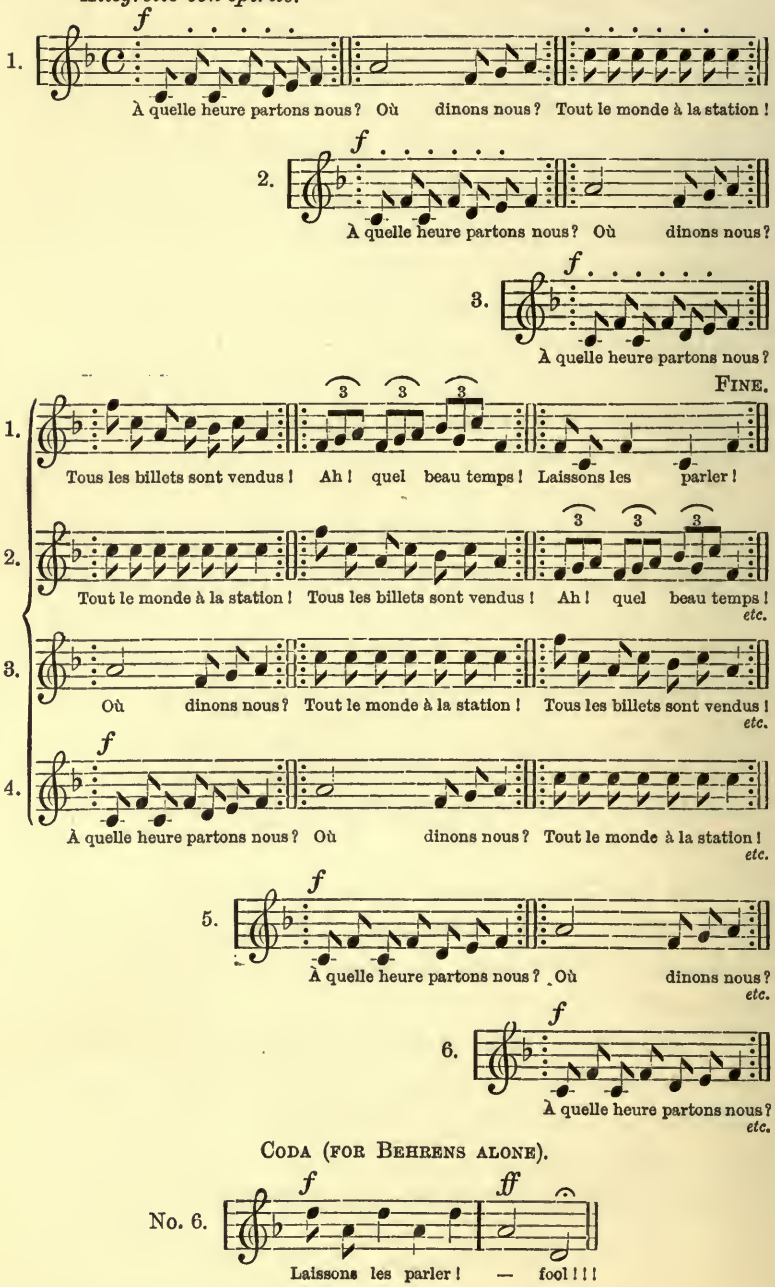
We others shone with a reflected glory. We were "not the rose," but we "lived near it," and came in for as fair a share of success as we deserved. Even my rather mediocre piano-playing was received very leniently. I was never much of a pianist, although I used to play in public fairly often in my still younger days, even doing so once at the Monday Popular Concerts and also at the celebrated Gewandhaus in Leipzig. As a matter of fact, I started in life with the intention of devoting myself to this branch of the art, and practised hard for the purpose, but it was not many years before I gave it up. I was always very nervous as soon as I came on to the platform, and I learned by experience that however badly I might play in private, I played still worse in public, which did not encourage me to continue.

Our journeys were often very long but never tedious, for we were a merry little party and man-

aged to pass the time pleasantly enough. On one of these journeys, having nothing better to do, I composed a canon, or catch, for six voices, the words of which were made up out of little phrases and remarks we were in the habit of using to express our disgust at having to get up early, or our delight at the approaching dinner hour, or our wonder at the fine weather, etc. It was not a great work of art, but at least it had the advantage of being less hackneyed than "Three Blind Mice," if not so tragic, and we sang it at every possible opportunity. Behrens was not quite so taken with it as the rest of us were, as his solo at the end shows (see p. 82).

It was still winter, with frost and snow everywhere, as we travelled through the country, and the almost endless forests of pine-trees and sheets of water that at other seasons make the scenery of Sweden somewhat monotonous, had a very beautiful appearance, with the white laden branches of the former, and the huge expanses of snow covering the latter, all sparkling in the sunlight. And well I remember how picturesque the great frozen lake round Jönköping looked with the brightly dressed peasants in their carts and sledges, crossing and recrossing it on their way from one little hamlet to another.

I remember, also, that on arriving at one place we found all the windows of our rooms closely pasted up with paper, as they had been probably for months, and I can still see the expression of utter astonishment on the servant-girl's face when

Allegretto con spirito.

CODA (FOR BEHRENS ALONE).

we took out our penknives and ripped open the windows to let in the fresh air. This astonishment increased to an absolute scare when we asked for a cold bath, and it was only after many assurances on our part that we had not come straight from a lunatic asylum that she was eventually induced to bring us one in the shape of a small wooden tub.

I may add, in parenthesis, that this bath of ours varied in size according to the habits of the place we were in. It was never larger than the aforesaid wooden tub, and dwindled down sometimes to the dimensions of an ordinary porridge bowl, which was all very well for Vieuxtemps and myself, but rather inconvenient for a man like Behrens, whose longitude was only equalled by his latitude.

We stayed nearly three weeks in Stockholm. Besides the usual concerts, Trebelli appeared at the opera in several of her favourite rôles, and so as to keep us from being idle on these occasions, we others generally played and sang two or three pieces to begin the evening, just as a sort of *lever de rideau.*

The Opera House at the time I am speaking of was, I believe, the oldest in Europe, having existed in its original condition for nearly a century. It was quite historic, too, from the fact that it was on its stage, during a masked ball, that Gustav III. was assassinated—on which event, by-the-by, the plot of Verdi's opera "Un Ballo in Maschera" was founded.

The performances I heard (of course leaving

Trebelli's singing out of the question) were rather tame and uninteresting, and the members of the orchestra seemed nearly as ancient as the building itself. Indeed, they played in such a sleepy fashion that they gave me the idea of having been, like so many Sleeping Beauties, overtaken by slumber at the time the theatre was built, and to be still waiting for some Prince, in the guise of an energetic conductor, to come and wake them up. However, it is quite possible that he may have arrived by now, and that with the recent rebuilding of the theatre things have much improved. One day Trebelli and I went to the Royal Palace. Of this visit what remains most vividly in my mind, apart from the King himself, is the costume of the official who ushered us into the royal presence (Monsieur le Coureur, I think he was called); this consisted, if my memory serves me, of a red velvet jacket trimmed with lace, blue velvet knee breeches, white silk stockings, and a red velvet cap with three enormous white plumes reaching far into the air, all of which made him look more like some huge exotic bird than anything else I can think of.

King Oscar was very gracious, and showed us, by the way he conversed on music and the arts generally, that his reputation as the most intelligent and artistic monarch of his time was by no means overrated. He was a handsome man, and looked every inch a King, and as his inches were very numerous, this was no mere compliment. As a matter of fact, he towered head and shoulders above every ordinary person, and it was quite the

usual thing when one met him at crowded receptions, as I had the pleasure of doing once or twice, to say to a friend whom one wished to see again during the evening: "Meet me in half an hour's time under King Oscar!"

I was delighted with Stockholm. Who, indeed, could be otherwise? The beauty of its situation, its many fine buildings, the clear northern sky and exhilarating atmosphere, and the geniality of the people, all combine, I think, to make it one of the most attractive capitals of Europe. But charmed as I was with it on this my first visit, it was not until I saw it in summer a year or two later, when its Venice-like waterways were no longer frozen over, and the woods and countless little islands by which it is surrounded were bright with foliage and flowers, that I appreciated to the full its many beauties. I used to sit for hours together at the windows of our hotel watching the prospect before me—the broad Quai, with its gay promenaders; the ferry-boats plying to and fro from one bank to another; the picturesque bridge, with its crescent-shaped *Strömparterre* and little café resting on the water beneath; and the majestic pile of the old Royal Castle on a rocky eminence keeping watch over all. Surely as fascinating a picture as any city can boast of!

The people of Sweden have an innate love of music. If the romance of bygone ages has not yet inspired in them any great creative powers, it has at least found an echo in their national melodies, which, if not so well known to the world, perhaps,

as those of Norway, are no less characteristic and beautiful. I heard several of them sung in private as four-part songs. They were new to me at the time, and I was so much struck with them that as soon as I reached Stockholm I bought the complete collection for further acquaintance. A funny incident arose out of this. When I returned home I showed the album to a musical friend, who at once expressed a wish to have a copy, so I lent him mine in order that he might know the correct address of the place where it was published. What was my surprise and amusement to hear afterwards that in writing for the songs he had mistaken some words on the title-page for the publisher's name, and had addressed his letter to "Herr Andra Upplaga (Mr. Second Edition), Stockholm!" However, it reached its destination all right, and he duly received the music. This recalls to my mind another example of unconscious postal facetiousness. On one of our English tours, for some reason or other which I now forget, I got to be called by the nickname of *Giovane Machin*, which is a somewhat spurious French-Italian way of saying "Young what-do-you-call-it." This name stuck to me for quite a long while. Well, a few months afterwards I had occasion to write to Trebelli to some provincial hotel, and signed myself in this familiar, if undignified, manner. She had already left the hotel, and after the usual delay the letter was duly returned to the post-office, with the result that on coming down to breakfast one morning I found on the table what I thought was an important official

document addressed in large letters to Giovane Machin, Esquire. I had quite forgotten for the moment my own *nom de camarade*, and it was not until I had opened the envelope and begun to read its contents that I realized what it was. It took a long explanation on my part, I tell you, to allay the curiosity and suspicion of my family, but in the end they laughed as much at the whole thing as I did.

For this digression, kind readers, please forgive me.

We made many friends, musical and otherwise, during our stay in Stockholm. Among the former was Hallström, the composer, who, though little known to the outside world, had a considerable reputation in his own country as the author of various operas, and was quite a *persona grata* at Court.

The Swedes are nothing if not hospitable, and our evenings, when not devoted to work, were mostly occupied in going to dinners, receptions, and other social entertainments. A dinner-party in Sweden is by no means a light affair, I can assure you. It has to be taken very seriously. First of all there is a side table crowded with all sorts of delicacies for the palate, such as caviare, herring salad, smoked salmon, anchovies, poached eggs, and suchlike. When you have eaten a really good meal there, and drunk a glass or two of *bränvin* (corn brandy), then the real business of the evening begins, and you sit down to the dinner proper. This is much the same as in other

countries, except that it is longer and heavier, and is washed down with every conceivable kind of wine, finishing up with liqueurs, Swedish punch, soda water, and sometimes even beer. Everyone present drinks your health, and you are expected to return the compliment at least once in every case ; custom further demands that there should be no "heel taps," but that you should empty your glass each time and point it at your neighbour like a pistol, to show that it is no longer loaded. The consequence of this is that, by the time you have been twice or thrice round the table, you are just in that happy, comfortable state when you want to go to bed and sleep it off. A foreigner requires a good digestion and a constitution of iron to live much in Sweden.

À propos of dinners, everybody is supposed to have a hobby of some sort, and Trebelli's took the form of purloining plates out of the hotel dinner services. Whenever she saw one that she fancied, she managed to convey it surreptitiously to her room, from whence it was eventually transferred to her own house to decorate the dining-room. As she travelled a great deal, these kleptomaniacal trophies became very numerous, and they might be seen hanging all round the mantelpiece and all over the walls, looking as bright and innocent as if they were still in the midst of their own family circle in distant lands. It was a pity they were not real antiques, for it would have been an easy

and cheap way of getting together a nice little ceramic collection.

The success which attended our concerts induced Trebelli to return in the summer of the following year, and to extend her tour this time to Norway. Behrens and I were again with her, but instead of Vieuxtemps we had Alwina Valleria (a talented soprano, who sang afterwards with the Carl Rosa Opera) and a tenor who called himself Talbò, but whose real name was Talbot—these two being replaced later by a young violinist named Jacquinot. We went first to Copenhagen, where we made a lengthy stay, and where I renewed my acquaintance with Gade, whom I had met at Birmingham two years before. He was a very interesting personality, not only for his music, but on account of his intimate friendship and association with Mendelssohn and Schumann. He had very quaint, amusing ways, and was as fresh and ingenuous as a child. I remember that at the Birmingham Festival, while he was directing a rehearsal of his own cantata, "The Crusaders," before a large audience, his energy and the heat of the day so overcame him that he suddenly and without warning took off his coat and conducted the rest of the work in his shirt-sleeves. This unexpected act, and the naïve manner in which he did it, created such roars of laughter and applause that it was some time before the performers could settle down again to their task. But he himself was nothing abashed, and enjoyed his own joke as much as anyone.

In Copenhagen we had three or four concerts a week with orchestra at the Tivoli Gardens, and also some performances of scenes from Flotow's "Marta."

I had only once before conducted any orchestral music save my own, though I had started on the initial stages of the art in my extreme youth, when I used to walk about the streets in an absent-minded fashion directing imaginary orchestras with my stick or umbrella—a habit of which I only broke myself after having hit one inoffensive, but irritable, old gentleman over the head, and nearly blinded another.

These performances (I do not mean my early ones in the street, but those in Copenhagen) gave me, therefore, much useful experience. One day we went over to Malmö to perform "Marta," but there our band was reduced to a string quartet and a piano, and I had to conduct with one hand and fill in the wind parts with the other as best I could, which was often as puzzling as those attempts we used to make in our childhood to draw a large D in the air with the right hand, and at the same time make a circle on the ground with the left foot. From Copenhagen we went to Gothenburg, and then on to Christiania. We were to have gone to the latter place by sea, but it was blowing so hard the previous evening that we decided to go over-land. Talbò was the only one who was brave, and said he preferred the sea in any weather to a stuffy train ; we were, therefore, all the more surprised to see him at the station the next morning. We

heard rumours afterwards that he had been on board in the night, put his luggage in the cabin, and had sworn that as he had made up his mind to go, go he would, even if the boat went to the bottom. A few minutes later the following short conversation was said to have taken place: "Steward, have you got any brandy and soda?" "No, sir!" "Then take my things back to the hotel!" Christiania was my first glimpse of Norway. I did not care particularly for the town itself, but the Fiord, with its hundreds of islands—almost Southern in character—charmed me very much. I also enjoyed riding in the little wooden carrioles, and on our free days we often made excursions into the country in a long procession of these once typical Norwegian vehicles. They were something like a cross between an elongated cradle and a wheelbarrow, with just room to stretch out one's legs, and having no springs to speak of, there was a considerable amount of jolting; but one got used to this after a while, and if one drove oneself (as was the only comfortable way), and with a fast native pony, the enjoyment and excitement were ample compensation for any slight discomfort. These vehicles are now nearly obsolete, and will soon be seen only in museums, along with the Vikings' ships and other antiquities, which is a pity, as they were highly characteristic of the country, and its quondam primitive people.

If the Norwegians had only kept the carrioles in use and relegated some of their articles of food, such as their reindeer, sour milk, cheeses, etc., to

these museums, most of us foreigners would not have regretted the exchange.

One of their cheeses is a very curious concoction. It looks like a large square loaf of bread, is the colour and consistency of brown Windsor soap, and tastes like mildewed honey. I once sent one to a friend, who wrote to thank me very much for my kind present, but said that he thought there must be something wrong with it, for though he had cut it into lumps and had tried several times—both with hot and cold water—to use it, he could not get the blessed thing to lather!

Our concerts and operatic performances in Christiania were very successful and well attended as usual. To the cast of the latter we had an addition in the person of an amateur friend from London, who sang the part of Tristan in "Marta," and at the last moment, Talbò being unwell, we had to press into our service a local tenor, who sang in Swedish, while the rest sang in Italian. He, Behrens, and our London friend were about the three tallest men I have ever seen together on any stage, measuring not far short of nineteen feet between them, and when they had to sing with Valleria, who was rather diminutive in stature, the effect was like a wax match standing up between three large church candles. I did not hear any music except of our own making, as it was out of the season, and the musical world was away on its holiday. I was glad, however, to find Johann Svendsen still there. We had not met since our student days in Leipzig, and since he had become

a celebrity, it was very pleasant to talk over old times and compare notes of the intervening years.

Our next stopping-place was Bergen, once perhaps the most picturesque and interesting town in Norway, with its curious old streets and wooden houses and quaint national costumes, but now fast becoming as modernized and monotonous as all other civilized places. We were very fortunate in having beautiful weather during our stay, for it is supposed to rain there eleven months out of the twelve. The climate of Scotland is like that of a barren desert compared to it. A story is told of a Dutch Captain who was in the habit of sailing to Bergen two or three times every year, and got so accustomed to steering into port through the mist and rain that once, when he came near to it on a bright, sunshiny day, he thought he had lost his way, and put back again to sea! *Se non è vero*, etc.

I was very desirous of meeting Grieg while I was in Bergen, but unluckily he was away from home, so I did not have the pleasure of making his acquaintance until he came to London some ten years later.

From Bergen our homeward route took us once more to Christiania. We went by sea, as we had come, passing through the lovely scenery of the west coast, and as the boat took three days to do the journey, and stopped each night on the way, we utilized the time by giving concerts at the little places where she anchored. These concerts

were got up at very short notice; in fact, they were almost impromptu entertainments, the only available hall or theatre being engaged by us on the spot, and bills and programmes printed in a hurry and sent round the town. The result, all the same, was very satisfactory, and we had large audiences.

I made yet another tour with Trebelli in 1879; but of this I need not speak in detail, as it was in most respects only a repetition of the others, with a slight change of artists. There are, however, one or two things I think worthy of mention. One is the recollection of a very interesting evening we spent at the King of Denmark's summer residence near Copenhagen. It was quite an informal occasion, without the least ceremony; but what made it especially memorable to me was the number of Royal personages who were present. There were the King and Queen, the Crown Prince and Princess of Denmark with their children, the Czarevitch and Czarevna with theirs, Queen Alexandra (then Princess of Wales) with the Duke of Clarence and our present King George, the Prince and Princess of Sweden, the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, Prince Charles (now King of Norway), and many other Royalties whose names I do not remember. Such an assemblage of future Kings and Queens could not have been seen anywhere except in the Danish Royal Family and at the period I am speaking of. The years have gone by, and Time has worked its inevitable changes.

Many of those who were Princes then have already fulfilled their Kingly destiny, and their Royal mantle now rests on the shoulders of the young children who that evening were seated at their parents' feet, listening while we played and sang to them.

Another, to me, important circumstance in connection with this tour was that we went farther north and more into the interior of the country than before, and I thus gained a much fuller insight into its beauties and characteristics. The grandeur of the inland fiords, the sombre mountains, the glaciers reaching down almost to the water's edge, the alternate gloom and sunshine, the old traditions and legends which make Norway so unique among European countries, all created a deep impression on my mind—an impression that found utterance not long afterwards in my third symphony.

There was one scene, however, that I almost regret I did not try to depict musically in this work.

We were passing through a great forest of pines early one summer's morning, when suddenly we came upon one of the most entrancing sights I have ever beheld. From the trunk of one tree to another for many miles were suspended huge spider's webs, all about the same size and form, the insects themselves being perched in the centre of each. These gossamer structures were covered with the morning dew, and the sun was shining on every drop, lighting up the whole with a brilliancy that made it look as if innumerable slender gateways of gold and silver tracery, with their grim

sentinels, were keeping guard over the entrance to Fairyland. The effect was magical. There was nothing one could liken it to except, perhaps, a transformation scene in a pantomime; only Nature, as usual, had succeeded a thousand times better than any scenic artist ever could have done.

On second thoughts it was, perhaps, just as well that I did not attempt to describe the indescribable in music; even Berlioz, with his Queen Mab-like touch, would have utterly failed to do it justice. And now I think I have said all there is to say about these tours. They were pleasant experiences, and of considerable value to me, for had I never visited these parts I should not have written my Scandinavian symphony; and had I never written the symphony, my slight reputation might have been slighter still, and (what is very much to the point at this moment) no publisher might have thought it worth while to print these reminiscences, even if I had been courageous enough to commit them to paper. So, like the nursery legend of "the dog who wouldn't go over the stile," all these things are interdependent one on the other, and I have therefore every reason to look back with pleasure and gratification on my tours in Scandinavia.

CHAPTER VII

My appointment as conductor of the Promenade Concerts—Anecdote of Wagner's "Meistersinger" — Humorous nights at the Promenades—Haydn's "Toy" Symphony at St. James's Hall—Production of the Scandinavian Symphony—My ballads—"St. Ursula" at Norwich—Visit to Vienna—First meeting with Brahms—Anecdotes of his music—Bülow—His wit and excitability—Pachmann—Richter—D'Albert—Goldmark and Popper—Hanslick—"Zigeuner" music in Buda-Pesth.

The following year was an eventful one for me. Up to this time my work had been to a great extent tentative, but I now began to take my art and career more in earnest and to endeavour to establish myself, as far as lay in my power, as a composer of serious purpose, if nothing more. Besides this, the opportunity—long sought for—came to me of making a real start in that other branch of the art to which I have since devoted a considerable portion of my life—namely, that of conducting.

In 1880 the conductorship of the Promenade Concerts became vacant, and I was offered the post. My immediate predecessor had been Sullivan, and before him, I think, Rivière. During the latter's tenure of office the programmes of these concerts were of a more or less light description, just suited

to his audiences; and this was perhaps as it should be, for although he was a conductor of experience in certain styles of music, he was little versed in the works of the great classical masters. I once heard him say to his orchestra before beginning a rehearsal of the "Flying Dutchman" overture—"Gentlemen, I must confess to you that I know absolutely nothing about this composition!" Of course, this was hardly the way to gain the confidence of his forces or to insure a good performance. When Sullivan took over the position things began to change, and, if I mistake not, after this long interval of time, the programme contained a much larger proportion of really good music than hitherto, thus paving the way for the cultivation of a musical taste among this class of audience that was then just commencing to show itself, and that has been growing gradually ever since, culminating at the present time in those crowds of enthusiastic listeners who frequent the Queen's Hall every evening.

At the time the conductorship was offered to me by Messrs. Gatti, the managers, I had had very little experience in conducting, as I have already mentioned in previous pages; but this was their affair, not mine, and I was only too willing and anxious to try my hand at it and see whether I possessed any of the stuff of which conductors are made. I never knew a musician yet who refused to wield the stick when he got the chance.

The Promenade Concerts used in those days to be held at Covent Garden Theatre. The stalls were covered over and the floor made level with the

stage—in much the same way as at the fancy dress balls now given there. In the centre was erected a huge orchestra towering up at the back nearly into the "flies"; in the front of the platform there was an elaborate gilt armchair that had been in use, I believe, since the time of Jullien; and half-way up among the performers stood an enormous circular drum which had never been played upon, except in the once-celebrated British Army Quadrilles (this unsightly instrument I did away with). Behind the orchestra was a long bar which, by-the-by, was always well patronized, and formed an important addition to the evening's receipts. On slack nights the audience in the promenade walked about freely, and somewhat disturbed the performances, but when there was any particular attraction this, of course, was not possible, and they were almost as closely packed together as they are now at Queen's Hall. Our orchestra was an excellent one, and all the best available artists sang and played during the season.

In the selection of the music I endeavoured to follow on the lines laid down by Sullivan. We had symphonies two or three times every week, and the rest of the programmes—at least as far as the first half of the concerts was concerned—consisted of overtures and other representative works of the great composers.

Tschaikovsky and the modern school were then unknown, but Wagner, who had been in London three years previously to superintend the "Ring" performances at the Albert Hall, was already a name to conjure with.

I fancy at that time—over thirty years ago—it must have been the unusual volume of sound—I was almost going to say noise—produced by the Wagnerian orchestra that attracted the masses, for his music was then scarcely diffused among them to a sufficient extent for any but real connoisseurs to recognize its intrinsic beauties. It appears curious to us now, when we listen to the ultra-modern compositions of the present day, to think that there ever should have been a time when Wagner's works were considered noisy, but a good many people used to call them so. Soon after the production of "Die Meistersinger" there was a story current in Germany that at a performance of the opera in some town, during the tumult near the end of the second act, the baritone shouted the German national song, "Die Wacht am Rhein," at the top of his voice, without anyone but himself being in the least aware that he was not singing his proper part in the ensemble.

However, be the reason what it may, the fact remains that whenever we gave any of Wagner's music at the Promenades, we were pretty sure of a good attendance. Despite the improved character of the programmes at these concerts, a remnant of the old custom still survived in the second half, which was made up mostly of waltzes, polkas, ballads, and the like; and it being considered beneath the dignity of the conductor-in-chief to direct these, his place was taken by the leader of the orchestra—a plan which was somewhat unneces-

sarily followed by Costa at the opera when there was any ballet music to conduct. An exception to the usual character of my part of the programme was the Humorous Night we gave towards the end of the season. I had heard of a similar thing being done in Glasgow (I think under Bülow), and it struck me that we might also try it in London. It was some time before I could get the Gattis to venture on such a novel form of entertainment, but in the end they consented, and they had no cause to regret it, for the theatre was so crowded, and the success so great, that the entire programme had to be repeated on two or three subsequent evenings.

Among the pieces we played were those genuinely musical jokes—Mozart's "Peasants' Sextett" and Haydn's "Farewell" and "Toy" Symphonies; and other items such as Gounod's "Funeral March of a Marionette," Sullivan's "Grotesque Dance," variations on "Lucy Long" for bassoon, which if perhaps not quite so obvious in their humour, did well enough as "padding" for the rest. The "toys" in the *Kinder* symphony were played by the principal members of the orchestra, and it was very funny to see our trumpet player (the best in London) striving to produce a fine tone out of the squeaky, miniature edition of his own instrument, or our drummer trying to get ear-splitting sounds out of his baby drum. None of them seemed quite as happy as the situation warranted, and I dare say they were very glad when the ordeal was over, and they could return to their accustomed places,

and hit and blow to their heart's content without fear of bursting anything.

Our greatest success was the "Farewell" Symphony. This we performed in the old traditional manner. The theatre was darkened, lights were put at the music desks, and as each player finished he took up his instrument, blew out his candle, and crept stealthily off the platform. In the end I was left alone, beating time, and seemingly unconscious of what was going on, until our scarlet-and-gold-clothed attendant (who was always a prominent and indispensable feature of the concerts) came up, tapped me on the shoulder, and drew my attention to the rows of empty desks, whereupon I, too, slunk away, looking half ashamed of myself, as indeed I really was.

I do not know if this sort of musical frivolity would go down with the public of to-day, but it might be worth the trial, and would be a little variety, say, after a night of Tschaikovsky or Strauss. In any case I commend the idea to my friend, Henry J. Wood, for his consideration.

While on the subject of humorous concerts, I must mention another performance of the Toy Symphony which took place somewhere about this time at St. James's Hall. It was got up by Viscountess Folkestone for some charitable purpose, and all the chief musicians of the day took part in it. Hallé played the "nightingale," Sullivan the "cuckoo," Benedict the bells, Stainer and Kuhe the trumpets, Blumenthal the "thrush," Randegger the drum, and so on; the violins were

Santley, Carl Rosa, and Cusins ; and Henry Leslie conducted. I was not considered proficient enough to be entrusted with anything more complicated than the piano (in which I was joined by John Francis Barnett); but I did not mind this very much, as I had thus a better opportunity of listening to the others and enjoying the fun. I remember that towards the end Sullivan got rather "mixed" with his cuckoo, and, intentionally or otherwise, played this bird's famous two notes *up* instead of down. Whether he had ever heard it like that and forgot to write to the *Times* about it I cannot say ; but in any case the effect was so ludicrous that it sent everybody, including all the Royalties present, into fits of laughter.

In the winter of the same year (1880) I gave a series of Saturday evening orchestral concerts, which were well attended by my own and my agent's friends, who all received free tickets ; but the paying public did not come, and in consequence the few five-pound notes I had managed to put by vanished very quickly into the pockets of the orchestral players, newspaper proprietors, and other clamouring creditors. However, it did me good, morally and artistically ; morally, because I never gave any more orchestral concerts of my own, and artistically, because I was able during the course of the series to produce two new works—the "Language of Flowers" Suite and the Scandinavian Symphony. I had been working on the latter ever since my return from Norway, and it was not finished until a short time before its production.

I recollect what a state of mind I was in when, having sent the manuscript to Vienna, by Richter's advice, to get the parts copied, the days and weeks passed and I did not receive them back. When it came to within a fortnight or so of the concert, I began to consider seriously whether, by working day and night, I could rewrite the score and have everything ready in time for the performance. Fortunately, however, just as I realized how impossible such a feat would be, and was resigning myself to the postponement of the work, the music arrived, and my mind was set at rest. The symphony was duly performed, and met with a much better reception than I ever anticipated. Still, it was not until Richter took it up, and played it at his concerts and afterwards in Vienna, that it was considered of any real worth among native compositions.

The success of "The Better Land" three years previously had brought, and was still bringing, me many commissions for songs from various publishers, and I wrote a large number of these from now onwards during my spare time from more important work. Many of them did not live long enough even to be present at the birth of their next-of-kin, but some of them still remain, and if they serve no other special purpose, they at least show what the ballads of twenty-five or thirty years ago were like. These were mostly of a stereotyped pattern, with two, and sometimes three verses, a catching refrain (if possible), an easy accompaniment, to suit young lady amateurs, and words that told some little

sentimental or pathetic story—pathetic for choice. One song I wrote, "The Children's Home," was, I think, responsible for more musical passings-away and transportations to heaven of little children than any severe epidemic of measles in real life ever could be. For a long while afterwards nearly all the songs were cast in this infanticidal mould, and I was always afraid of opening any sets of verses sent to me in case I should be doomed to read about the inevitable little child, with a faded flower in its hand, occupying a prominent seat among the angels.

Nowadays this pathetic history of infants is, happily, out of fashion, and so indeed are all little stories told in verse. Things have much altered, and—to put aside this jocular mood of mine—although we now take our songs, both words and music, mostly in a sort of tabloid form (I am at it again!) I ought to say, although our songs are as a rule so short that they are over almost before one has settled down to listen to them, they are certainly (what there is of them) far superior, far more musicianly in all respects than those which were in fashion in my younger days.

All the same, I cannot see why the so-called ballad, if it be a good one, should be looked down upon with contempt. A simple poem, set to simple, melodious music is surely better and more capable of making its way direct to the heart than a vague wandering about of unvocal passages coupled with unexpected discords and inharmonious sounds in the accompaniment.

Such songs as Schubert's "Serenade," Brahms' "Wiegenlied," Haydn's "My mother bids me bind my hair," and many others I could name by the great masters are, after all, only ballads, and their appeal is all the stronger by reason of their simplicity and melodiousness.

The mistake is that English ballads are all classed together in one and the same category—namely, they are ballads, and nothing more—and because the successful ones (not always the best) happen to be more remunerative to the composer than other forms of compositions, no distinction is drawn in the minds of the hypercritical between the good and the bad.

I am not apologizing here for any success I personally may have had as a writer of songs—nearly three hundred in all—but of those among them that may be called ballads, and that have become popular, I see no cause to be ashamed, nor do I think that their composition has rendered my aims in other departments of my art any the less serious or aspiring. Moreover, I did not remain long content with this form of song-writing, but shortly after the production of my Scandinavian Symphony I began to compose another class of musical lyrics, chiefly for my own pleasure, in which I could give rein to my fancy and ideas as I wished, without thought of any immediate gain or success. A set of these songs was published during the year, and was followed from time to time by eight or ten other albums containing, I think I may say, my best work in lyrical composition. In the first of these

albums was a song called, "Alas, how easily things go wrong," with words by the poet Macdonald. I had taken the verses without permission, and when he heard of this later, he was very angry and refused to sanction their publication, so that I was obliged eventually to have new words adapted to the melody. However, when it originally came out it was known by this title, and was rather popular. One day I was in a music-shop and heard a lady asking for the song; but she did not seem quite sure what it was she wanted, for all she could reply to the assistant's inquiries was, "I have forgotten the name of the song, but I know it is by Cowen, and it is something about *how easy it is* to go wrong!" I did not wait to ascertain the result, but I have no doubt she got the music all right, and I only hope she was not disappointed when she found that the moral of the song was not quite what she had expected.

My cantata, "St. Ursula," was produced at the Norwich Festival in 1881. Although it had the advantage of being sung by Albani, Patey, and Lloyd, and was performed afterwards in London, it did not have any lasting success, for which my choice of the subject was largely to blame. I was rather fond of saints in those days, not, I am afraid, from any particular similarity in my nature to theirs, but because of the dramatic element in their lives, and the scope this afforded for musical treatment; but I found out when it was too late that the public did not care for them, nor for Huns, nor for eleven thousand virgins, any more than it

does now. Still, notwithstanding the lack of interest in the poem, the music contained, if I may say so, some of my best writing. The orchestration was more advanced than anything I had yet done, and some of the effects were very bizarre ; in fact, the whole was perhaps, if anything, rather too daring for the work of a young Englishman at that time. But I still think that if I were to revive the cantata (which I am not going to do), and leave out the Huns and Martyrs, or turn them into Sicilian cut-throats and passionate peasant maidens, it might stand a better chance of success than it did then.

In the early part of the following winter I went to Vienna to assist at the production of my Scandinavian Symphony. I arrived the day before the rehearsal, and being a little tired after the long journey, I was sleeping peacefully at nine o'clock the next morning when a messenger came to the hotel from Richter to say that he was waiting for me. I had no idea that the Viennese people commenced work with the dawn, but of course I jumped out of bed at once, dressed as quickly as I could, and went over to the hall. I missed the first movement, but I was still in time to make a little speech to the orchestra in my best German, and to listen to the rest of my work. The performance took place on the next Sunday. I believe it was a very fine one, as it was bound to be under Richter, and with an orchestra then considered to be one of the best in the world ; but I confess I did not hear it, for this being practically my début as a composer on the

Continent, I was too nervous to sit among the audience, and remained in the artists' room at the back.

I judged, though, that it was successful from the fact that I had to come forward and bow many times, particularly after the adagio and at the close of the work.

In this adagio the horns are placed away from the platform so as to produce the effect of distant music upon the fiord. In connection with this perhaps somewhat theatrical device, Stanford, when he was performing the symphony at Cambridge, facetiously remarked that he thought of stationing the horns in Edinburgh and working them by telephone! This plan has never yet been adopted to my knowledge, but it might sometimes prove advantageous when, owing to the discordant efforts of incapable players (as in some of the performances of the work I have heard), distance—the greater the better—might lend extra "enchantment to the ear." This movement, I think, appealed most of all to the public of Vienna, but the entire composition, as I have mentioned, met with as great a success as I could possibly desire. A further proof of this was that it was at once accepted for publication by a Viennese firm, and very soon found its way to all the chief musical centres of Europe.

I stayed nearly three months in Vienna. It was during the *Fasching*, or carnival, when the city was at its gayest, and as I had taken a good many letters of introduction with me, I had a real good time; going out evening after evening to receptions, dances, dinners, and suchlike entertainments, in

which the indefatigable people of Vienna love to indulge. The most memorable of these receptions was one given by Prince Hohenlohe in honour of the Emperor, at which of course the whole aristocratic world was present. It was a very brilliant sight, but I found it somewhat dull after a little while, for I did not know many people there, and even if I had, the rooms were so crowded that it would have been a mere chance had I come across any of them. So, after forcing my way to the front to have a good look at the Emperor, and admiring the elegant costumes of the ladies (not to speak of the faces above them), and the handsome uniforms of the men, I returned to my humble apartments.

A very pleasant and less formal house was Baron Rothschild's, where I spent several delightful evenings, and where I used to meet Princess Metternich, who, I remember, was the first, and I think the only lady, I ever saw with a large cigar in her mouth—she sometimes smoked two or three of these in an evening.

I certainly enjoyed all this going about very much, but I found it rather expensive for my then not too well-filled pocket. It was the custom (and may be still) to tip the servant of every family where one visited, to do the same to the concierge who let one out of the house, and to repeat the process with one's own porter whenever one went home after ten o'clock—which was every night. All this, together with cab hire (by no means an unimportant item in Vienna) soon mounted up to a

considerable sum. But I made up for it by taking all my meals, when I had to pay for them myself, at the cheapest restaurant I could find.

The musical life, too, was very enjoyable. I went as often as possible to the opera, as well as to all concerts that were worth going to, and became acquainted with most of the prominent musicians who were either residing in the city or visiting it professionally. My first meeting with Brahms was quite accidental. I was being taken round by a friend one evening shortly after my arrival, to see the "Bohemian" life of the town, and we happened to look in at a café which was—well, it was not exactly one of those fashionable places patronized by the élite in the feminine world of fashion. As we entered, whom should I see but Brahms and Bülow, seated comfortably at a table, drinking their *Seidels* of beer, smoking, and thoroughly enjoying themselves, in blissful unexpectedness of being recognized. I had an introduction to the former, but I did not think it was quite the moment to make myself known to him, so I retired and waited for a more fitting opportunity to present my letter.

Brahms was somewhat reserved before strangers and un-get-at-able. He lived chiefly for his art, and cared little for so-called society, but when not at work he was happiest in those surroundings where he could feel absolutely at his ease (as the above incident shows) without risk of being "lionized" by people in whom he had no interest. There was one *Kneipe* (beer-house) much frequented

by musicians which he specially favoured, and where I used to meet him sometimes of an evening ; and when there, in the midst of his colleagues, he would be quite sociable and pleasant.

He had his humorous moments, too, as instanced by the anecdote of his being present at a concert during the performance of a new work, and, at a certain point, taking out his handkerchief and making a knot in it. When asked why he did this, he replied : "To remember that pretty melody by."

He was averse to show or fuss of any kind, and I recollect a recital Bülow gave of his (Brahms') compositions, on which occasion he walked nervously up and down in the street all the time, and nothing could induce him to show himself to the audience. *À propos* of his music, a funny thing once happened to me. I was at a concert in London where they were playing his sextet, and just to pass the time before the performance began, I entered into conversation with a man seated next to me. From his remarks I gathered that he was an enthusiastic admirer of the great composer, for he told me he had come up from the country on purpose to hear this concert. Finding, as I thought, a congenial soul, I tried to draw him out, and said : "Do you know much of Brahms' music ?" "Not very much yet," he replied, "but I love his songs." "Indeed !" I continued, highly pleased, "do tell me which of them you like best." "Well," he answered, "I think my favourite of all is 'The Death of Nelson' !"

After this I left him in peace for the rest of the evening, but I have often wondered since whether he really enjoyed *Brahams'* sextet, or whether he returned to his home a sadder and wiser man, with his ideals shattered for want of just one little "a."

As a case of mistaken identity and general "muddling up" of everything, the following anecdote is equally good.

I was at St. James's Hall on another occasion when Walter Bache was giving one of his piano recitals. The first piece of the concert was a Bach fugue. Two elderly ladies who were there seemed much interested in the proceedings, and I overheard one say to the other, looking at her programme: "Oh, just fancy! he is going to play one of his own fugues, and he lives opposite to me, and they say he is such a nice fellow, and so good to his mother!"

I saw and heard Bülow a good many times while I was in Vienna. No one could help admiring his wonderful artistic gifts, prodigious memory, and general intelligence, but his nervous, irritable manner made him a difficult person to get on with. At one of his concerts, when several of the Imperial family were present and made a few observations to each other in an undertone (probably about his playing), he turned round to them and called out "Hush! hush!" in such a brusque, angry voice that I wonder they did not get up and leave the hall.

Very different this from Liszt, who, when he was playing before the Czar of Russia and that

monarch began talking, stopped suddenly in his performance and made the celebrated remark: "When Majesty speaks everyone should be silent." This was also a rebuke, but done in a courtier-like fashion to which even the Czar himself could hardly take exception.

There are many stories told about Bülow and his excitable ways. When he was in Glasgow, conducting the concerts there, he kept everybody in such a state of fear and trembling, never knowing what he might say or do next, that, notwithstanding his great abilities as a conductor, they were much relieved when the season was over and he had departed.

At one concert he got so excited because some piece he was performing went badly that he took up the music-stand and threw it into the audience, some of whom narrowly escaped being seriously hurt.

Another time he was giving his overture "Julius Cæsar," and had engaged a man specially to play one important note on the big drum in this work. Things were not very satisfactory at rehearsal, as the man could not count his bars, and was always coming in at the wrong time; but at last, after Bülow had repeated the particular passage over and over, he succeeded, as he hoped, in getting it right. Alas! when at the concert the eventful moment in the overture arrived, the poor player through sheer nervousness missed his cue, and the expected one note was never forthcoming. Realizing what he had done (or, rather, *not* done) he

left the orchestra hurriedly and ran into the street; but Bülow put down his baton and was after him like lightning, and the two had a regular race, the drummer running for dear life, and Bülow, without hat or coat and foaming with rage, following as hard as he could. What the upshot was history does not relate, but I expect Bülow gave up the chase after a while and returned to the hall to finish the concert, leaving the offender to be dealt with when he came for his salary. Bülow's wit was proverbial, and though, like many people of this description, he often indulged it at the expense of others, yet it was always so spontaneous and to the point, that one could not but be amused at it—so long as it was not directed against oneself.

His remark about the conductor who ought to have been a bus-conductor "because he was always behind," is rather a *chestnut.*

But the one he made about Norman Neruda (Lady Hallé) is perhaps not so well known. One day in course of conversation he kept on alluding to her as "lujah," and when at last someone asked him why he did this, he said, "I call her 'lujah' because she is inseparable from her other half, Hallé!"

Personally, I always was lucky enough to find him in a good temper, and when I conducted for him at the London Philharmonic, he was amiability itself, and said many flattering things about the way the orchestra accompanied him.

Pachmann was another of my friends in Vienna. He was quite a young man, just beginning his

career, but had already made a sensation by his playing of Chopin's music, and notably of the Study in thirds, which was the most perfect thing of the kind I ever listened to, but which he regretfully told me not long ago he could not play any more. He was even then full of those quaint little personal ways and mannerisms which have always delighted his audiences almost as much as his great pianistic gifts, and which made him, then as now, a very entertaining person in private life. I saw a good deal of him when he first came over to England, and I believe I was the only one of his colleagues who was present at his wedding, and took part in the curious ceremony of the Greek Church which appertains to these occasions.

Richter lived in the suburbs, some way from the centre of the town, and as his duties at the Opera and Philharmonic Concerts kept him usually very busy, I did not see him as often as I could have wished, but we kept in touch with each other as much as possible during my stay, and I went to his house whenever he was able to receive me. Young D'Albert was then living with Richter, having come from the Royal College of Music a few months before to continue his studies, I think, under Leschetizky. The first time I met him there I naturally spoke to him in our own language, but he pretended not to understand, and answered me in German. This was the beginning of that strange phase in his early career which made him for a long while deny his English birth and education, and which caused a considerable amount of un-

pleasant feeling among his compatriots. However, this is all long past and forgotten, and in any case his reputation has since become so cosmopolitan as to render his nationality a matter of little importance.

Among the other resident musicians I used often to meet were Hellmesberger (head of the Conservatoire), Leschetizky (then at the height of those powers from which other pianists have learnt so much), Grünfeld, the favourite of society (who had one popular piece—his Serenade—which people were never tired of hearing), Goldmark, the composer, and Popper, the 'cellist. I always connect the last two in my mind on account of Popper's witty, if rather satirical remark in reference to his elder colleague. Goldmark wrote a symphonic suite called "The Rustic Wedding," which I need hardly tell my musical readers was very popular at one time, and he was so enamoured of it himself that he used to travel about everywhere either to conduct or listen to it. This fact everybody in Vienna was aware of. One day Popper arrived at a hotel in some small German town, and looking through the visitors' book, he saw Goldmark's name; whereupon he wrote at the side of it just these two words—*with suite!*

Mackart, the celebrated painter (whose studio I often visited), and Hanslick, the critic, conclude the list of prominent people I knew in Vienna.

Hanslick's criticisms were read all over Austria and Germany, and carried great weight, for he not only wrote well, but was difficult to please, and any

young artist who came in for his praise was at once assured of a reputation. He was not free from prejudice, and was much influenced by personal considerations, as, for instance, when he wrote against Wagner for years, because the composer neglected to call upon him during his visit to the Austrian capital. Sometimes his prejudice was carried still further and got the better of his personal feelings, and though, speaking for myself at the time, he treated my symphony very leniently, yet I remember that when he came over here, all the hospitality that London and its musicians were able to extend to him did not prevent his writing an article in his paper running down everything and everybody in the English musical world—which to say the least was not quite kind.

At the end of March I reluctantly left Vienna, and went to Buda-Pesth, where I had been invited to conduct my symphony. I only remained there a few days, but long enough to have a good look at this interesting old-new city, to admire its charming situation, and to hear for the first time several of those genuine *Zigeuner* bands and their music, which were then little known in our country, but which have since become popular, mostly through spurious imitations whose members hide their various nationalities under cover of blue or red uniforms.

From Buda-Pesth I went to Stuttgart (also to direct my symphony), and then returned home.

CHAPTER VIII

Visit to Wales—The Welsh people's love of singing—Choral Society's picnic—Gounod's "Redemption" at Birmingham—Proposal to establish a National Scottish Academy of Music—Ferdinand Hiller—My "Welsh" Symphony at the Philharmonic—Shakespearian Fête at the Albert Hall—Mackenzie's "Rose of Sharon"—Anecdote of the "Meistersingers" Glee Party in Glasgow—"The Sleeping Beauty"—Dvořák—Joseph Maas—Visits to Paris to conduct my works.

The remainder of this year (1882) does not call for any special notice. I cannot remember anything of particular musical interest to myself or anyone else that occurred during these months, and in looking through the list of my compositions, which I have always kept religiously, I appear to have written very little. All I can find are an arrangement for four hands of my Scandinavian Symphony, a suite for strings (the score of which is lost), and about a dozen songs.

I suppose I must have been what the French call "stepping back in order to jump better," but I seem to have taken a long time in stepping back and a still longer time before I jumped again. Be this as it may, my memory is a blank with regard to anything else of importance. I do not think I even chalked my shoes preparatory to any

musical five-barred gate I may have contemplated vaulting over later on.

I know that in the early summer I went to Wales and settled down for a few weeks in a charming little inn at a place called Tan-y-Bwlch, engaged a sitting-room and a piano (dating from the remote period of the old Welsh Kings) and had every intention of working industriously ; but evidently I got no further than the intention. I expect that by the time I had tuned the piano, mended the keys and pedals, and cleaned the inside, the weeks had passed and I had to take my departure. Now I think of it, I spent most of the days in exploring the neighbourhood, climbing the hills, and acting as a sort of boarding-house keeper to the honeymoon couples who were my only fellow-lodgers, and who, with their nearest hands clasped under the table, could only eat with the outside ones (that is to say, he with his left hand and she with her right), to say nothing of the carving, which I had to undertake for them.

All I did, besides the foregoing profitable occupations, was to get an insight into the natural love of singing that obtains among the Welsh people. In my wanderings I used frequently to come across small parties of them, seated on the grass slopes, singing in good four-part harmony any pieces they could remember, chiefly hymns.

It is strange that this innate taste for vocal music should not have led them in all these years to a keener appreciation of the higher forms of the art ; strange it is, too, that not only in their case,

but, generally speaking, all over the country, the people's idea of convivial singing should be for the most part limited to simple religious melodies. In Germany the open-air life is made gay with the popular songs of the students; in Scandinavia the peasants delight in their old plaintive folk-tunes; in Italy the Neapolitan gives us his native *canzone*, or the Venetian his serenade; but here, when the country folk come together, they sing hymns.

I remember once being invited to a picnic given by a Choral Society, whose name wild horses will not drag from me. No sooner had we arrived at our destination and partaken of a ham sandwich, some lemonade, and a few other such delicacies, than what did they do but start singing hymns and choruses from the "Messiah," and they continued this practically throughout the afternoon. It was hardly my idea of a festive entertainment, and I felt, as one sometimes does in a very formal drawing-room, that I wanted to do some daring deed, suggest a game of "leap-frog" or "hunt the slipper," or something equally rash, just to see what the effect would be. However, I resisted the temptation, and waited as patiently and resignedly as I could until our special train came to take us back to ——, on reaching which town I immediately went off to a farce at the theatre to try and thaw my risible faculties. I have no doubt the others sang more hymns before they went to bed. This sort of thing makes me think of the story of the Bishop who put up at a small country

inn, and while dressing in the morning heard the landlady singing "Nearer, my God, to Thee." When he came downstairs he complimented her on her religious fervour, to which she replied, "Lor, sir, it ain't that exactly; but that's the toon I always boil my eggs by—one verse if I want 'em soft, and two if I want 'em hard!" A German landlady might possibly have used the overture to "The Marriage of Figaro," or an Italian the Intermezzo from "Cavalleria," for the purpose; but, at all events, there was a definite, if mundane, object in this woman's matutinal piety, and if my friends at the picnic had been of her way of thinking, I would willingly have overlooked their little weakness, for the eggs would have been a welcome relief from the dry ham sandwiches. Please let it be understood that I have no desire to laugh or scoff at the practice of hymn-singing *per se*—such a thing is far from my thoughts—indeed, as an act of religious devotion in a place of worship, nothing could be more soul-inspiring, but I cannot help thinking that such music is hardly conducive towards that gaiety of spirits which one associates with an outing on a sunny summer's day.

One event I had nearly forgotten to mention was the Birmingham Festival of this year, at which I conducted my little suite, "The Language of Flowers." The most important work produced on this occasion was Gounod's "Redemption." The oratorio created a great deal of excitement at the moment, owing to the composer's immense popularity and his personal presence at the Festival,

but though it was performed all over the country within a short space of time, its success gradually waned, for which the monotony and triviality of much of the music is largely accountable.

Great as were Gounod's gifts as a composer in his own special way, no one could say that he was a first-rate conductor. He was most amusing to watch, and reminded one of nothing so much as an animated telescope. When he wanted a passage played very softly he would sink down almost to the ground, until his head was quite hidden from the performers by the music-desk; on the other hand, when he required a big *crescendo*, he would raise himself on tiptoe and stretch out his body and arms until he had the appearance of a man about to take a deep dive.

During the next year I seem to have been still in the "stepping-back" stage, for I composed nothing except a few more songs, some piano pieces, and a Barbaric March. The latter I wrote for a fancy-dress ball given by the Savage Club at the Albert Hall (the first, I think, of those big entertainments now so fashionable), in the course of which the members of the Club, dressed as Red Indians, paraded round the building, whooping and brandishing their spears in time (or as nearly so as they could get) to the wildest and most uncouth music I have ever perpetrated. Personally, although a member, I did not put on tar and feathers, as I thought such articles of attire might not command the necessary respect from the

orchestra, besides which, a tomahawk would have been an awkward thing to conduct with.

It was in this summer, if I recollect rightly, that a scheme was mooted to establish a National Academy of Music for Scotland, either in Glasgow or Edinburgh, and my name was proposed as Principal of the Institution. I went to Glasgow, whence the idea had originated, and was interviewed by the town councillors and professors who formed the provisional committee. They examined me as to my capabilities for the position, and plied me with (as they imagined) facetious questions about whether I preferred Beethoven to Rossini, or what I thought of Bach's fugues; in fact, in vulgar language, they tried to pull my leg; but I took it all quite seriously, and they got no change out of me.

My proposed honorarium was not very large, though perhaps somewhat more substantial than the one offered to the clerk of a certain town on his retirement from office, when one of the Council got up, and in reply to the suggestion of an honorarium in acknowledgment of the clerk's long services, said, "What is the use of giving him an honorarium? he isn't musical, and couldn't play upon it if we did. I propose that we give him what the instrument would cost in ready money!"

The Academy was never started, for a dispute arose between the two rival cities with regard to its headquarters. They had counted their chickens before the eggs were even laid—I may say, before the place was found to lay them in. Edinburgh, with

her reputation for learning, thought the head-quarters ought to be there, while Glasgow, who provided nearly, if not quite, all the funds, wanted them in that city; so between the two stools of intellect and money, the scheme fell to the ground.

In the autumn I followed my symphony about —much in the same way, I am afraid, as Goldmark followed his suite—and conducted it in several German towns, amongst them, Aix-la-Chapelle and Cologne. My stay in the latter place was made very interesting by my acquaintance with Ferdinand Hiller, who was then the Director of the Conservatoire there, and conductor of the Gürzenich Concerts where my work was performed. Of course, I knew many of this eminent musician's compositions, and his F sharp minor Concerto was one of the pieces which every young student in Leipzig had to learn. The last movement was a particular favourite of ours, for we used to play the first three notes of the theme, whenever they occurred, with our fists instead of our fingers (that is to say, when our master was not looking), finding this much more effective than the ordinary way, though I doubt if Hiller himself would have appreciated the little joke. My intercourse with him, short as it was, has left many pleasant memories behind, for his kind nature, his taste for other intellectual and artistic pursuits besides music, and the interest attaching to him through his intimate friendship with nearly all the great musicians of the early part of the century, made him a delightful man to know. He spoke English fairly well—better than

he wrote it—as is shown by the following extract from one of his letters. I had written him about a performance of "St. Ursula" in Cologne, and also to ask for his portrait, and this is part of his reply, quite like Ollendorf's grammar in its happiest moments.

"I answer rather late to your kind letter, but I was often unwell, I had no photography, and sincerely I knew not what to say about your question concerning 'Saint Ursula.' Certainly the Cantata deserves to be executed" (I wonder if he meant that the saint herself merited her fate?), "but you have no idea of the number of composers and compositions which are waiting. . . . The execution of your Symphony has troubled half a dozen of other ones—a Cantata would perhaps despair the dozen entire. After all, as the translation is not a very large affair, at your place I would make it do. Though the life is short, the years are long."

Well, for some reason or other, I did not make the translation "do at my place," and the "execution" of the saint and her eleven thousand companions amid their own historic surroundings remained unaccomplished.

In 1884 I began to be much busier again. I was still writing songs, and among these was a set of six dedicated to the Duke of Albany, who told me he intended to try and sing them himself. This promise, however, was not destined to be fulfilled, as his illness and lamented death occurred shortly afterwards. But as well as these trifles,

I started again on more important work, one result of which was the production of my fourth symphony, "The Welsh," at one of two Philharmonic Concerts I conducted that season. I do not remember at the moment whether I gave it this title myself, but in any case it had a certain amount of Celtic flavour about it, and I expect its composition was not unconnected with the recollections of my rambles, my broken-down old piano, the hymn-singing, and the honeymooners of two years before.

When this symphony was given at the Crystal Palace a few months later, a rather strange thing happened. The original Philharmonic analysis of the work was written by Francis Hueffer, the *Times* critic, and contained certain remarks about my gift of melody, knowledge of the orchestra, and a few other such complimentary allusions. This was signed with his initials, "F. H." The Crystal Palace authorities, to save trouble, made use of this same analysis, but the printers, thinking there must be a mistake somewhere, as they often do, wickedly added the letter "C" to the other two initials. No one saw this until the day of the concert, too late for correction. Most of the Press, I think, guessed what had occurred and accepted it as a good joke; not so one critic, however, who on the following Monday morning showered a heap of abuse on my innocent head for having had the audacity to praise myself in such a bare-faced manner. I had naturally to write to the paper and explain the matter, but I do not

think the gentleman was ever quite convinced about it.

A big social function of this summer was the Shakespearian Bazaar held at the Albert Hall for a charity. The arena of the building was transformed into a number of little theatrical booths, taverns, and scenes from the poet's plays, that did duty as stalls, and at which many of the high-born ladies of the land, dressed in Shakespearian or Elizabethan costumes, sold the usual shilling wares at half a guinea. As a rule there is not much affinity between music and a bazaar—the art is of little importance beside the signed photographs of actors or the raffle of Lady So-and-So's needlework. But in this case things were much better, as I was asked to get up a series of concerts devoted exclusively to songs composed to Shakespeare's poems and other music associated with his plays, and a very interesting series it was.

Not to be outdone by anyone else in point of attire, I appeared on the scene as Sir Walter Raleigh, in magnificent doublet, short slashed hose and cloak, all of violet velvet, with hat and silk tights to match; a very handsome but somewhat chilly costume for the rigours of an English summer. I particularly mention my costume because it was to have played a conspicuous part in the proceedings. The Princess of Wales (as she then was) paid a visit one afternoon to the bazaar, and the rumour got about that she also intended honouring our concert with her presence. I immediately made up my mind what I would do.

As soon as she entered I would advance towards her, go down on one knee, and, taking off my cloak, would lay it at her feet and ask her to be good enough to walk over it. Whereupon she would graciously assent, and would say to me, in her soft voice, "Rise, Sir—no, I am not yet permitted to do that, but I will speak to Her Majesty about it on the first opportunity!"

I had thought it all out carefully, but alas! she never came, so my act of gallantry and hoped-for honours were nipped in the bud, and I had to console myself after the concert with the only two other things for which I ever heard Sir Walter was famous—viz., tea and tobacco.

A charming souvenir of this bazaar was issued at the time, containing original poems by Tennyson and Browning, drawings by Fildes, Cruikshank, Burgess, and many other contributions by the celebrities of the day. It is a unique little book, and has probably by now become very scarce.

Two other musical events of this year occur to my mind.

One was the Norwich Festival, which I attended for the purpose of conducting my Scandinavian Symphony, and where the first performance of Mackenzie's "Rose of Sharon" took place. My old friend Randegger was then conductor-in-chief of these Festivals, and, indeed, up to a few years ago. He had taken Benedict's place in 1881, and, having more enthusiasm and energy in him than the latter, he raised the concerts to a higher level of artistic success than the other had been able

to attain. He was very instrumental in introducing new compositions by British musicians, and I think he must have had a considerable personal liking for myself, as from the time he occupied the position there was scarcely ever a festival at which he did not include some work of mine in the programme.

Mackenzie had come before the world the previous year with his opera "Colomba," and the reputation he had already achieved through this work caused his new oratorio to be awaited with much curiosity. As this is a book of personal reminiscences and not of criticism, I will only say that the oratorio (from a musical point of view at all events) certainly came well up to the anticipations that had been formed of it, and the "rain of roses" showered on him at the close was as graceful a tribute to its success as a composer ever received.

The other event was my going to Scotland to direct some of the concerts of the Glasgow Choral Union, now amalgamated with the Scottish Orchestra. Manns' engagements necessitated his return to London, and I was his locum tenens for the time being, conducting concerts both in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and being the honoured guest at a banquet given by the Society of Musicians. This was my first introduction to the musical life of Scotland, in which I was in the future to take so prominent a part, and with which some of the pleasantest recollections of my later years are connected.

There was a party of glee-singers in Glasgow at this time calling themselves "The Meistersingers." (I am not sure whether they sang at any of our concerts, but in any case they were in the city when I was there.) They sang exceedingly well, and were very popular throughout the kingdom. I am not alluding to them, however, on account of their excellent four-part singing, but because of their still more surprising *eight-feet running*, as exemplified in a ridiculous incident that happened, and that I can never think of without a hearty laugh.

I was returning one night from the concert when I saw a four-wheeler coming down the hill. Something looked very strange about the vehicle, but what it was I could not make out until it came close to me; then I saw that there were eight legs and feet protruding from underneath and running for dear life to keep pace with the horse. As soon as the driver was able to stop I went up, and there I found my four friends tightly wedged in the cab (they were big, tall fellows) in a sitting posture, with their feet on the *ground*. It appears that the bottom of the old vehicle had fallen out, their legs had naturally followed suit, and the only thing they could do was to trot along the road comfortably (?) until such time as cabby condescended to hear them and put an end to their somewhat undignified situation. This may not perhaps *read* very funnily, but it certainly was one of the most comical sights I ever witnessed, and reminded me very much of those little drawings of kettles, tongs

shovels, and other household furniture one sometimes sees with arms and legs attached to them, in the act of scampering away or performing some other extraordinary and ridiculous antics.

I was at work the greater part of the following year (1885) on my cantata, "The Sleeping Beauty." Much of this was written while I was staying at a little place on the Thames. I used then to be very fond of boating, especially canoeing and punting, and my spare hours from work were spent in one or other of these exercises.

I remember how simple I thought punting was—before I tried it. I chose rather an unfortunate day for my first attempt, as there was a regatta going on, and the river was crowded with boating craft of every description. This I did not mind very much. I imagined it would be quite easy to get across from one bank to the other; and so it was really—after a time. My audience, though, might have been more indulgent, and if it pleased me to go round and round in a circle, or to show my dexterity in extricating myself from the pole just when the river became deeper than I expected, or to help other people who understood nothing whatever about boating, and who might have been capsized had I not caught hold of them—that is no reason why they should have made unkind remarks about me. For I did get safely to the other side after about an hour—I could have done it in much less time had I been in a hurry—and I was rather hurt, after the way I had distinguished myself, to

read a paragraph in a paper a few days later to the effect that I was evidently accustomed to wield a stick of less weight than the one I used on this occasion, and that, judging by my efforts to battle against the stream, I was not such a good *contrapuntist* as people thought.

The libretto of my cantata was written by Francis Hueffer. He and Bennett did a good deal of this sort of work, and being the critics of two most important newspapers, it was a delicate matter to object to collaborate with them, or to suggest alterations in the book when once they had delivered it. But, with the dearth of really good librettists, it was Hobson's choice, and a composer, if he were not able to write or compile his own libretto, or did not just fancy any of the standard poet's works, was glad to find something that at least bore a resemblance to poetry fitted for musical treatment.

The book of "The Sleeping Beauty" could not be called high-class poetry, but it was dramatically constructed, and the verses, if they were not exactly inspiring, at least did not hamper one's ideas. There was a love duet in the work to which Hueffer himself was evidently very partial, for he used it again, word for word, in the opera, "The Troubadour," that he wrote for Mackenzie. When I discovered this, and mildly remonstrated with him, pointing out that the copyright of these verses belonged to me, he replied that he knew all about it, but thought I would not mind, and he was anxious to see what Mackenzie would make of

them. Previous to this I lent him my copy of Mérimée's "Colomba" to look at, telling him that I was thinking of having it dramatized, and the next thing I heard about it was that he had taken it himself as the subject for Mackenzie's earlier opera.

These were some of his waggish little ways. After all, there was not much harm in them; only, in the first case I should have preferred to keep my love duet all to myself, and in the second, I lost what I thought at the time would be an excellent plot for an operatic libretto.

"The Sleeping Beauty" was produced at Birmingham in the summer, with Mrs. Hutchinson, Trebelli, Lloyd, and King as soloists. The work was successfully launched, though the orchestra and chorus were perhaps a little too ponderous for the light character of the fairy legend. Trebelli's dress was, as they say in the society journals, one of the chief features of the evening. I was never much of a hand at describing these things, but I remember very well that the costume was black, and was covered all over with gold and silver figures and hieroglyphics, after the manner of a magician's robe. When I remarked upon it, she told me that as she could not act the part (the Witch) on the platform, she wanted at least to look it. This she certainly did, and as to her singing of the music, nothing could have been more dramatic, notwithstanding that her pronunciation of English was often very faulty.

This festival was rendered memorable by the

first performance of two other works—Gounod's "Mors et Vita," and Dvořák's "Spectre's Bride." The former was much after the pattern of the composer's "Redemption," but had not the same interest for the public that always attaches to any subject dealing with the life of the Saviour, and the same comment might be made on it as I heard made on the other—and even with greater truth—that it was "the weak work of a strong man." "The Spectre's Bride," on the contrary, proved to be one of Dvořák's finest compositions, and the weird and novel music at once produced an effect on the audience that is still felt whenever the work is performed.

Dvořák bore few traces of his humble origin, except that his appearance was rather rough and uncouth. In manner he was lively and companionable, and took a keen interest in everything that went on around him. He was not in the least conceited, which was all the more remarkable, considering that he sprang suddenly from absolute obscurity into an all-world popularity that was enjoyed at the time by few other composers. Another and sadder thing in connection with this festival was that it was the last occasion of the sort at which Joseph Maas ever sang. Only those among us who are past middle age will remember the beautiful, sweet quality of his voice—more like Giuglini's than any other I ever heard—and how we all wished that that sweetness might have been combined with greater power and energy.

Still, he was a charming singer, and we little

thought, when listening to him then in "The Messiah" or "The Spectre's Bride," that a few months hence his career would be at an end, and the beautiful voice stilled for ever.

I paid two visits to Paris about this time; one to direct the Scandinavian Symphony at a concert of the new orchestral society just then started by Benjamin Godard, the composer; the other for a performance of my "Sleeping Beauty" given by the Société Concordia. The translation of this work was made by Augusta Holmès, herself a composer of considerable talent, and well known in France, and was really far superior in its language and poetic expression to the original. I had tried to get the cantata played by Colonne or Lamoureux, but there were difficulties in the way with regard to the chorus, so I had to fall back on the Concordia. It was only an amateur society, but the soloists were all very competent, with good voices, the choir well trained, and the orchestra (a professional one), though small, quite efficient. Altogether the performance was an effective one, and seemed to meet with the approval of the not-too-easily-pleased Parisian public.

CHAPTER IX

Opening of Liverpool Exhibition by Queen Victoria—Abrupt termination of my overture—My fifth symphony at Cambridge — "Ruth" at Worcester Festival — "Dance of Reapers" disapproved of—Elgar as an orchestral player—My election to the conductorship of the Philharmonic Society—Mme. Schumann—Tschaikowsky—Grieg and his wife—My candidature for the principalship of the Royal Academy of Music — Appointment as conductor of the Melbourne Exhibition.

Exhibitions, and bazaars, and other such functions seem to have been my lot during this period of my career. There were two of the former in 1886, for both of which I received commissions to write some of the inaugural music. One of these, at Folkestone, was not a very important affair, and as far as I remember, all that we did on the opening day was the National Anthem and the March I had composed for the occasion.

The other exhibition, at Liverpool, was on a grander scale and was honoured with the presence of Queen Victoria—the first time she had visited the city for a number of years. It was a very wet day, but rather than disappoint the large crowds that had assembled to catch a glimpse of her, she drove through the streets in an open carriage with an umbrella over her head. The musical portion

of the opening ceremony was under my direction. We had a good choir and orchestra, and the programme consisted of some choruses from Mendelssohn's "Hymn of Praise," another choral piece, I think, and part of my new overture. I say part, because the work was never played through to its conclusion. Our platform had been erected by the civic authorities, who knew little, and cared less, about music, somewhere in a corner of the building, quite away from the dais on which Her Majesty was seated. Neither she nor any of the officials round her could see or hear anything we were doing, and consequently, from what I was told, the situation after a few minutes became very awkward and embarrassing. I had hardly got half through the overture when a card from the Mayor was handed up to me with just these two words written on it — "Please stop!" I could not imagine what had happened, but of course I had to obey orders and allow the rest of the ceremony to be proceeded with. I afterwards received a very apologetic letter from the Mayor, and as it was no use crying over spilt milk, I did the next best thing, and accepted the apology and the situation with the best grace I could muster. But I was very disappointed, for I had taken a good deal of trouble over the work, and, in compliment to Her Majesty, had interpolated a chorale composed by the Prince Consort, which she herself had given me permission to use.

There are many occasions, doubtless, when in listening to a work we should all like to say "Stop"

before it is half over. I have also heard of important compositions being played twice in the same concert (as I believe Bülow did with the Ninth Symphony); but this is the only instance I know of a work being brought to an abrupt termination because no one could hear a note of it! The overture was given shortly afterwards in London under Richter, and this was its first, and I may add, *only* complete performance. Perhaps Her Majesty did not lose much after all.

For the second time in my life, this year found me occupied in orchestrating someone else's compositions. With regard to Benedict's "St. Peter" (mentioned in Chapter I), he was, of course, thoroughly capable of writing the score himself, and it was nothing but the urgency of the moment that forced him to apply to me; but in the present case my young friend, for whom I undertook the work, was absolutely inexperienced in this branch of the art, and that was no doubt the reason that induced me in a weak moment to offer to help him. I was rather given in those days to doing things for nothing—not always to my own advantage.

I recollect being asked once to come and accompany a celebrated artist at the house of a friend, a man of considerable wealth and influence in the social world. When I arrived, I found that the singer (it was Patti) had brought her own accompanist, so my services were not required, and I amused myself as well as I could among the rank and fashion who were present, until it was time to leave. The next day I received a substantial

cheque from my friend, which, however, I felt myself justified in returning to him with the remark that as all I had done was to spend a pleasant evening in company with his other guests, I did not think I was entitled to the money. He evidently did not enter into the feelings that prompted my letter, for he never replied to it, and from that day to this has never spoken to me.

I merely allude to this incident as a warning to all my young colleagues not to be too proud or independent in this world. Be as conceited as you like, but never refuse to be patronized; it isn't appreciated, and you may not only deprive yourselves of a welcome addition to your income, but may lose your best friends into the bargain.

All this by the way. The work I scored for my young confrère was a comic opera in three acts, and it kept me occupied for a matter of four or five weeks. Unfortunately, it was not a success and only ran a few nights. Still, I do not regret the time spent on it, for the chance thus afforded him of a hearing was the stepping-stone to a career that, after he had learnt to write for the orchestra himself, became quite a prosperous one in the lighter form of comedy opera which was his special bent.

With a passing mention of a set of vocal duets and about twenty songs written during this year, I now come to some compositions of more importance than anything else I had done since "The Sleeping Beauty." The Cambridge Musical Society, of which Villiers Stanford was then the conductor,

were going to give a concert in the following May consisting entirely of works by British composers, and they invited Mackenzie, Goring Thomas, and myself to write something specially for the occasion. Mackenzie was unable to undertake this, and they gave his "Belle dame sans merci" instead. Goring Thomas, I think, composed an orchestral suite, and my own contribution was a new symphony, No. 5 in F major. The concert was held during Commemoration Week (1887), and it was hoped (as I was privately informed) that the University would avail itself of our presence in Cambridge to confer on us the Honorary Degree of Musical Doctor. This did not come to pass. Our names were indeed submitted to Macfarren, who as Professor of Music had to be consulted in the matter; but he raised an unexpected difficulty by adding two or three more names to the list—a wholesale order that the Senate did not feel disposed to carry out. Poor Goring Thomas died without receiving the coveted honour, there being no other favourable opportunity of offering it to him. Mackenzie, however, obtained his degree in due course, and so did I mine after an interval of thirteen years.

Previous to writing the symphony, I had started on the composition of an oratorio, "Ruth," to be produced at the Worcester Festival in the following September. This I now took up once more, and was busily engaged on it throughout the whole summer. It was the biggest work, in point of length, I had yet attempted, and its composition

was not unattended with difficulties. The book, adapted from the Biblical story, was compiled by Bennett, who, according to his usual habit, sent me the text in short instalments, so that I never knew beforehand what the next part was going to be like, and I often had to wait for days with no material to work upon, until by dint of numerous letters and telegrams from me he would at last be persuaded to send me another number or scene. However, I managed to complete the oratorio in good time, and it was duly produced in Worcester Cathedral, with Albani, Patey, and Lloyd as the chief soloists.

Although its reception both by the public and the press was very flattering, I am afraid the character of the work was not quite what the clergy of the city had expected. The simple Biblical story had taken my fancy, and the different scenes (well arranged by Bennett, though he did keep me waiting for them) gave me plenty of scope for varied musical treatment, pastoral and devotional, as well as some massive choral writing at times. But with real oratorio, in the sense of fugues, chorales, and detached airs, the work had little in common. This the ecclesiastical authorities might have pardoned, but I had introduced a dance of reapers into the harvest scene which shocked their feelings of religious propriety beyond forgiveness. A "pastoral idyll" in a cathedral might be allowable at an emergency, but a dance—never! Yet I cannot understand to this day why they should have objected. Dancing and religion

constantly went hand in hand in early times, and the former was as natural an expression of devout rejoicing among the people as were their songs of thanks and praise. What, therefore, was there unfitting in the portrayal of this within the precincts of a sacred building? In this particular instance, too, one of the themes of my dance was founded on what was supposed to be an authentic old Hebrew melody, so the local colour was as appropriate as I could make it. It availed nothing. Pious Worcester never recovered from the mental vision of my poor reapers' innocent revelry after their day's labour, and my name has never since appeared in any festival programme of that city. "Ruth," however, did not suffer on this account, and the work was successfully performed in all our chief towns within the next few years. Latterly its appearances in public have been somewhat intermittent, and it may almost be said to have retired temporarily into private life, not from inclination, but through force of adverse circumstances. I heard the oratorio not many years ago, after a long interval of time, and came to the conclusion that although I have done better work since, there is much in it that still sounds fresh and spontaneous, and I have secret hopes for its future welfare, one day when the present hysteric palpitations have calmed down and the world of music is once more beginning to breathe peacefully.

My recollection of the Worcester performance is a very confused one, for I was feeling very poorly, and how I got through the excitement of the

morning and the concert again in the evening, when I conducted my Scandinavian Symphony, I do not know. This is scarcely to be wondered at, considering that the next day I was seized with an attack of scarlet fever that incapacitated me from work for the rest of the year.

It may interest my musical readers to know that in Worcester I once had under my baton no less distinguished a person than Edward Elgar. It may have been at this very festival, but of this I am not quite sure. In the days before he started on his brilliant career, he used to play the violin in the local orchestra, occupying a humble position among the back desks, and dreaming probably of some embryo "King Olaf" or "Gerontius," while he mechanically followed the conductor's beat. Of course, I was not aware of this on the occasion in question, and even if I had been his name would have conveyed nothing to my mind at the time. But what a pity I was not vouchsafed a glimpse into the future! What a chance I might have had of "bossing" him for once! I could have said to him: "Look here, my friend, you are going to be very celebrated, but at present you are *not*, so if you are not more attentive I shall refuse when the time comes to conduct those big scores of yours which require specially made desks to hold them, and a telescope to enable the conductor to read the top lines!" Unfortunately, there was nought to make one realize that the concert differed in any way from an ordinary one, so this splendid opportunity was lost, never to occur again.

All through my illness I was chafing at my enforced seclusion, and looking forward to the time when I should be able to resume work. All the more so, because I had just then been elected to the Conductorship of the Philharmonic Society, and was anxious to be quite fit and well again for the proper fulfilment of my duties in connection with the position. Three years previously I had been led to hope that I should be the Society's conductor, and I was bitterly disappointed when I heard that Sullivan had been chosen in my stead. However, the force of the old saying, "Everything comes to him who knows how to wait," has many times been brought home to me in my own career, and in this particular case, perhaps, I was none the worse for having the experience of another three years on my shoulders.

The post was an enviable one, for at this time the only other important orchestral concerts were those given by Manns and Richter; and the Philharmonic, with its time-honoured prestige, took rank, then as now, as one of our chief musical institutions. The orchestra, with Carrodus (my old violin master) as leader, was as fine a body of instrumentalists as one could desire. It is true that they were inclined sometimes to be a little lethargic and irresponsive, but this was a habit they had perhaps unconsciously acquired under earlier conductors. I remember Carrodus once saying, with reference to a Beethoven symphony we were performing, "We can play it in our sleep," to which I rather unkindly replied, "That is exactly what

you do, but the effect would be so much better if you played it when you were awake !"

Another time I spent over an hour in rehearsing the "Midsummer Night's Dream Overture"—an unprecedented thing—because I could not get them to play the passages as lightly and softly as I wished. But these after all were only minor defects, which became less and less noticeable, and were counterbalanced by a technique and a brilliancy of tone, especially in the strings, that was quite exceptional.

I imagined I had really been successful in my new position until one day when I unexpectedly discovered what the world thought of me. It was at a luncheon party, and the conversation, after hovering round such usual topics as the theatres, the Academy, the latest scandal, etc., eventually settled on music. A lady seated opposite to me, who had been to the Philharmonic the previous evening, but who, nevertheless, did not recognize me, began talking to me about the concert, and thinking by my interested look that she had got hold of a sympathetic listener, proceeded to run down the performance and my conducting in very outspoken terms. Nothing seemed to have satisfied her ; the programme was poor, the band worse, and as to myself, I could not possibly be anything of a conductor, because I bent my knees so dreadfully the whole time ! As soon as she commenced her tirade, silence fell on the rest of the company (who all knew me)—one of those silences that occur when someone in a loud voice asks a woman after

the husband she has just divorced. They all waited to see what I would do. But as a matter of fact, after the first moment or two of surprise, I was beginning to enjoy the novelty of the situation, and hastened to agree with the good lady in the hope of getting more home truths out of her, which I certainly did, to everyone's discomfiture but my own. The only contradictory statement I made was that I always thought the greatest proof of a conductor's talent lay in the cut of his dress-coat, not in the action of his knees. I don't know whether she appreciated the subtlety of my remark, for everyone rising from table at this moment, our conversation came to an end, but it was very inspiriting and refreshing while it lasted. It is not often one has the chance of hearing what people really think of one, and a few doses of this wholesome medicine are the best cure I know for that prevalent disease among artists known as *caput protuberans.*

The programmes of my first season contained an array of celebrated names. At the opening concert in March, 1888, Madame Schumann made her final appearance at the Philharmonic (and, I think, in England), playing Chopin's F Minor Concerto, and accompanying Miss Lisa Lehmann in some of Schumann's songs. Considering her age—she was close upon seventy—her powers were but little diminished; her fingers, perhaps, had become somewhat feeble, but the charm and repose of her playing, her clearness of execution, and the classic beauty of her phrasing, still remained almost unim-

paired. She had a curious way of following her fingers up and down with her head close to the keyboard, which in another might have seemed affected, but with her charming, old-world appearance was quite fascinating to look at.

I wish, though, that she had played her husband's Concerto and given us at first hand all the original traditions which, I had always been told, made her interpretation of the work so interesting.

She was very punctilious at rehearsal, and I remember she made a few alterations in the horn parts of the Chopin Concerto which gave us some trouble, but which in the end we played seemingly to her complete satisfaction. Not satisfied with this, when the rehearsal was over she copied out the bars herself and sent them to me for the horn player's use, so that nothing should be left to chance at the concert. Another thing she did was to make me place my desk behind the piano instead of in its usual position, as she said the movements of the conductor disturbed her when she was playing. This was quite an innovation in this country, and in many respects a good one. It has since been obviated in certain places by putting the pianoforte on a separate little platform in front of the orchestra, but the old plan still exists in most of our concert halls, and is an awkward arrangement, the lid of the instrument being usually so high as to prevent many of the performers from seeing the conductor's beat.

At the next concert Tschaikowsky made his début as composer-conductor before an English

audience. His name was then little known here except among musicians, although he had already given to the world many of his finest compositions. The works he selected for the occasion — his Serenade for Strings and the Variations from his Third Suite—were scarcely what would now be considered representative of his genius at its best, and though the reception they met with was favourable enough, there were few if any signs of the phenomenal success his music was destined later to obtain, not only here, but all over the world. His visits to London (he returned the following year) were so brief that I had little opportunity of being in his company except at the rehearsals and concerts. This I much regretted, for he seemed a man of a pleasant and friendly disposition and enthusiastic temperament, to whom one would be attracted more and more as one got to know him better. He did not speak English, and I had to stand at his side all the time and translate his wishes to the members of the orchestra. This I had to do with nearly all the foreign composers who came over. In fact, I was as much interpreter-in-chief to the society as I was its conductor. My foreign *confrères* did not always recognize the receptiveness of our players, and, glad as I was to show the former every possible courtesy, it became just a little tiring when, in response to their requests, I used to have to say continually to the orchestra, "Please, gentlemen, Mr. —— would like this again"; and the passage would be repeated over and over, even after it was perfect, until the

patience of the performers was often wellnigh exhausted, and, what was worse, little time left us to rehearse the rest of the programme.

After Tschaikowsky we had little Otto Hegner, a very talented boy pianist (I wonder what became of him?); and then came Grieg to play his own Concerto and conduct some of his smaller orchestral pieces. He was not a great pianist, but he could play his own music with much effect. The popularity of his compositions, too, made everyone curious to see him in *propria persona*, and added not a little to the success he achieved. He and his wife (who was a very capable singer) were an interesting couple. They were both quite short, with bright intellectual faces and rough grizzly hair, and looked more like brother and sister than husband and wife. They had simple, unaffected natures, and seemed as much attached to each other as they were to the art they both followed. He was perhaps the more simple-minded and ingenuous of the two. Once I published a set of doggerel verses in a musical paper, and added a postscript to the effect that having at last found my real vocation in life, I was thinking seriously of abandoning the career of the musician for that of the poet. Grieg got hold of this, and immediately wrote to me saying how sorry he was to hear of my decision, and hoped I would reconsider it. I replied that I had not yet definitely made up my mind about the matter, but was awaiting the success of the big epic poem I was writing before taking the fatal step. What he finally thought of

me I cannot say, but I doubt if it ever entered his head to look on the thing as the silly little joke it certainly was.

Sophie Menter played at the next concert, and this was my last for the time being, an unexpected event having occurred in the meanwhile to take me away from my duties for the rest of the season.

In the early part of the year the Principalship of the Royal Academy of Music had become vacant through the death of Macfarren, and I sent in my name as a candidate for the post. Mackenzie and Barnby were both well to the fore in the running, but I thought there was no reason why I should not also enter the field as a competitor.

What ultimate chance I might have had I know not, for only a few days afterwards circumstances arose that completely upset my plans. The Victorian Government was seeking a conductor to undertake the direction of the music at the Melbourne Centennial Exhibition to be opened in the following August, and I was offered the position. At first I was very disinclined to accept. My love of travel and desire to see new countries were a great temptation, but, on the other hand, I did not relish the idea of being away for the best part of a year from my home and my work. After considerable weighing of the pros and cons, I decided to refuse, or, rather, I made my fee, as I thought, so prohibitive that I never expected to hear anything more about the matter. To my surprise the

committee replied offering me a sum so near to the one I had named that I should have been foolish to resist any longer ; so the contract was duly signed and sealed, and I began to make preparations for my departure.*

Before all this could be definitely settled, however, I had to obtain permission from the Philharmonic Society to absent myself from the last two concerts of the season. This they were good enough to give me, and invited my old fellow-student, Johann Svendsen, to take my place. I recollect that I was in Cheltenham conducting my "Sleeping Beauty," when the letter of permission from the Philharmonic arrived. The day and place are associated in my mind not only with this occurrence, but also with a very heavy snowstorm that blocked all the railway-lines, and made us very anxious as to whether Trebelli and the other artists who were to sing at the concert would be able to reach the town at all. This anxiety increased as the day passed and we heard nothing. Eight o'clock came ; half-past eight ; and still no signs of any of them. The audience waited patiently. Then, just towards nine o'clock, and as we were thinking what we could do to provide some sort of entertainment for the evening, in they all walked ! They had had nothing to eat, and had come straight to the hall in their travelling clothes, fortunately none the worse, as far as their voices were concerned, for their adventures.

These and other little contretemps, incidental to

* The fee I received was £5,000.

the itinerant life of an artist, are not of infrequent occurrence. Personally, I am thankful to say that in all my travelling about the country I have never yet been snowed up, but I have on several occasions lost my luggage, and had to appear in borrowed plumes, gathered either from friends, or sometimes even from the hotel waiters. Once—this was on a pleasure expedition, not a musical one—I got soaking wet while walking in the Alps, and on reaching the hotel where I was going to lunch, I had to take off my clothes to have them dried in readiness for me to continue my journey. As I was very hungry and could not well appear in the dining-room in such complete *déshabille,* I sent in quest of a change of apparel. All I could manage to secure was a suit belonging to the landlord himself. He was one of the very tallest, very fattest men I have ever seen—a regular Daniel Lambert—so I cut a pretty figure, I can assure you, when rigged out in his clothes. The only way I could wear the nether garments was by drawing them up under my armpits, and folding them two or three times over my chest, and even then I trod on them at every step I took. As to the jacket, it reached well below my knees, and when buttoned, the hollow space between where I ought to have been and where I really was could easily have accommodated a couple more people of my own size. I am very glad that the Swiss tourists did not possess Kodaks in those days! I wonder what would have happened had it been a concert instead of a table d'hôte luncheon?—something tells me that

I should have shirked the whole business and refused to conduct!

As I was saying, when I interrupted myself, I obtained the requisite leave of absence from the Philharmonic Committee, and all the preliminary arrangements for my visit to Australia being now satisfactorily settled, I set to work on a Song of Thanksgiving for chorus and orchestra which I had been invited to compose for the Exhibition. This composition, a sort of cantata in three movements, was published here, and the copies sent to Melbourne as quickly as possible, in order that the choir might lose no time in rehearsing the work and getting it ready for the opening ceremony.

CHAPTER X

A frivolous chapter—Marie Corelli—Robert Buchanan—The Savage Club—Its frequenters and amusements—H. S. Leigh and Henry J. Byron—The Green Room Club—Thorne and James in burlesque—Toole's love of joking—George Grossmith—The "Oasis" Club—The "Salon" and its æsthetic members—Frivolous evenings at home—Trebelli and Grossmith—Poetic invitation and its replies—Parodies of my songs—Burnand's parties—Performance of Zampa Overture—How we passed the time at a Musical Conference—My speech at the Tonic Sol-fa Association—Witticisms and puns of my musical colleagues.

Before relating my experiences in Australia, there are some other recollections connected with the years I have just been speaking about, to which I feel I must devote a few pages. I may as well say at once that this is going to be a very frivolous chapter. Music, at least in any serious form, is not concerned in it, nor indeed is anything else that can be called serious. It is merely an account of a number of amusing incidents that occurred from time to time, which, as they were largely associated with my own social life, must be mentioned in order to make the record of these years complete.

If any of my hyper-musical readers think the following pages beneath their dignity to read, and should feel disposed to skip them, I shall not be hurt. Personally, I can never recall these incidents and the people connected with them without

experiencing a feeling of sincere regret that the innocent frivolities with which we used so often to while away our spare hours from work should now be out of fashion. The world—social and artistic—has grown so staid nowadays, so monotonous in the way it takes its pleasures, and life is such a rush and whirl, that there is no time left for real laughter and merriment, though I doubt, even if there were, whether the simple, almost childish amusements of thirty years ago would still be appreciated.

I must begin with some reminiscences of the early days of those still flourishing Clubs—the Savage and the Green Room—of which I became a member in the seventies. What made me join these clubs I cannot exactly say. I know that my artistic tastes were not confined to music only, and I was always glad of any opportunity that brought me into contact with kindred spirits in other arts and professions besides my own. This opportunity I often had at the house of my friend, Robert Francillon, whom I have already mentioned in an earlier chapter as the librettist of several of my choral works. He and his wife (a daughter of John Barnett, the composer of the now forgotten opera, "The Mountain Sylph") gave weekly receptions throughout the winter, which were attended by many well-known people in various walks of life, and more especially by the rising generation of poets and *litterati* of the time. There I used to meet Marie Corelli, who sang songs with a pretty little voice, and had not yet begun, or

thought of beginning, her brilliant literary career; Edna Lyall and Annie Thomas, both popular writers in the lighter style of fiction; other novelists of a more serious calibre, such as Justin McCarthy and Christie Murray; Robert Buchanan, with whom I once nearly collaborated in a comic opera; the blind poet, Philip Marston; Arthur O'Shaughnessy and John Payne, young disciples of the Swinburnian school, and many others.

I think it must have been through some of these poetic and literary "Bohemians" that I was induced to become a Savage, and probably it was in turn through the members of this club (amongst whom at the time were a good many actors) that I was duly elected to the Green Room. However, this does not matter very much, and it is sufficient for the purposes of this chapter to say that I *was* a member, and used to spend many evenings at one or other of these places.

The Savage Club, when first I knew it, held its meetings in rooms over a small tavern in the Strand, but moved not very long afterwards into more commodious premises. Its weekly Saturday entertainments were an institution almost from the beginning. We dined at six o'clock. At about half-past seven the majority of the members would go off to their duties at the theatre—to criticize or be criticized—and the rest of us would be left to pass a long and rather dull interval as best we could until they returned about midnight, when the real business of the evening commenced, and was prolonged far—often, very far—into Sunday

morning. Much the same plan of procedure still prevails, I believe, but the old familiar faces have nearly all vanished. Most of those who were the chief instigators of our mirth have either gone over to the great majority, or have sobered down, like myself, and abandoned the haunts of their youth; and I doubt very much whether the fun is as free and spontaneous now as it used to be. Among our entertainers there was Lionel Brough, who told racy stories in his own inimitable manner; Brandon Thomas, who had not yet dreamt of such a person as Charlie or that celebrated Aunt of his with her wonderful propensity for running, and who sang little negro songs of his own composition with a mixture of comedy and pathos that was quite fascinating; Charlie Warner, of "Drink" fame, who thrilled us with his melodramatic rendering of a recitation called "At the mouth of the pit" (I think it must have been the only recitation he knew, for he never gave us any other); and Arthur Cecil, whose great *cheval de bataille* on these occasions was a most impressive sermon he used to deliver on that beautiful text, beginning "Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's man!"

Among our other most amusing members were Byron (the author of "Our Boys," not the poet) and Harry S. Leigh, who wrote the "Carols of Cockayne." Byron was exceedingly witty, and was never at a loss for a repartee, or a remark, or a pun, on whatever happened to be the topic of the moment, even if it told against himself. One of the best things he ever said was on the first

night of his play, "Cyril's Success." The piece was not being received with much warmth, and he himself had the feeling that the audience thought it tedious and spun out. There was an unusually long wait between the second and third acts, and evidently something was not quite right, for the noise of sawing and planing of wood was heard on the stage. A friend who was with Byron in his box asked him if he had any idea what was the matter, to which, notwithstanding his disappointment, he could not resist replying, "I don't know, but I expect it is the carpenter *cutting out* the last act!"

Harry S. Leigh ran Byron very close in this gift of saying witty things, and was, besides, a great adept at telling funny stories. He was a thorough "Bohemian," not too much blessed with the good things of this world (impecuniosity was rather prevalent among the members of the Club in those days, and arrears of subscription were not unknown), and prided himself on never possessing a dress coat. There was one occasion, though (I forget what it was), on which he was obliged to put himself into evening dress. So he went to a second-hand dealer and hired a suit, paying for it in advance, as one usually does, I believe, under the circumstances. Having worn it—as he himself used to tell the story—he took it back the next day and abused the man in strong language, asking him what he meant by giving him a coat that was full of fleas! "Vell," retorted the man, "vot you expects for 'arf a crown? 'Umming-birds?" I

have often wondered whether this was a true story, or only one of his own amusing inventions.

With such stories, recitations, songs, and the like, our evenings, or rather nights, would be spent; and, as I said before, there was never any thought of going home until someone, maybe a little more sedate than the rest of us, would suddenly exclaim, in the words of Mrs. Price in the "Ingoldsby Legends": "Look at the clock!" This happened as often as not at the witching hour when the milky streak above in the heavens was already supplanted by the "milk below!" in the areas, which is only a poetical way of saying that it was already long past dawn. We would then seek some belated cab into which, when found, we would get—five or six of us in the same one—and calling perhaps on the way at a hot coffee or potato stall (do these still exist?), deposit each other in turn on our respective doorsteps, each of us trying his best to avoid being the last to be thus deposited, for fear of having to pay the whole fare.

The Green Room in its convivial meetings was not unlike the Savage, except that there was no early dinner nor long wait afterwards, and as the theatrical profession largely predominated, no one went there until the theatres were over. My membership brought me into association with most of the chief actors of the day. Irving, as far as I recollect, did not come very much to the Club, even in the early days when he played in "The Lancashire Lass" and "The Two Roses," and although I used to meet him fairly often at other places, I

was never thrown sufficiently in his company to claim more than an ordinary acquaintanceship with him. With many of the others, on the contrary, I was on terms of excellent, and, in some cases, intimate friendship. Among those who frequented the Club most were Toole, Wyndham, Henry Neville (whom I remember seeing in that stirring melodrama, "The Ticket-of-Leave Man," when it first came out and used to move its audiences to excitement and tears), Forbes Robertson, Grossmith, Corney Grain, Warner, Thorne, James, and Bancroft; and among the younger men, just making their reputation, Beerbohm Tree, Brandon Thomas, and Pinero, the latter of whom gave up acting not long afterwards for the more important, and, in his case, more lucrative, rôle of dramatic author.

Thorne and James were as constant companions off the stage as they were on, and I used to see a great deal of them both. I remember a burlesque they acted in called "The Field of the Cloth of Gold," in which I think James played Henry VIII. and Thorne Francis I., and both of them sang and danced after the then approved manner of such pieces. It was a genuine burlesque of the old style; very silly, perhaps, but no worse in this respect—if of a different type—than some of our more modern musical plays. At all events, we enjoyed its simple nonsense at the time and laughed immoderately at it. This was, of course, before the days when fame and full coffers came to these two actor-managers with the success of "Our Boys."

Toole was one of the best natured of fellows, and his love of practical joking and fun of all sorts was proverbial. He was excellent company, though this tendency of his was sometimes rather embarrassing to those who happened to be with him. He was never more amusing than when travelling in the train. He had invented a language of his own—what it was composed of Heaven and he alone knew. Every now and then one could catch a word that sounded something like English, but the rest was as impossible for the ordinary individual to understand as Arabic or Hebrew. This lingo he spoke, or, I should say, jabbered quite fluently, and he loved to mystify everyone round him with it.

I remember one day going down to Margate with him and two or three other friends, and at every station he would call up the guard or porter and begin one of his unintelligible sentences with a serious look on his face, pointing to some person or object at the other end of the platform. The poor guard, hearing a word or two that sounded familiar, would think at first that Toole was perhaps speaking indistinctly, and would ask him to repeat his remark, this time with even a worse result than before. At last the man, getting more and more confused and not knowing what on earth it was Toole wanted, would send for a brother official to see if *he* could unravel the mystery. Then the three of them would argue the matter, Toole pretending to get very angry at not being understood, the guards gesticulating in despair,

and we others inwardly convulsed with laughter, until the sound of the whistle put an end to the little farce—only for the moment, however, for at the next station the whole scene would be repeated, with such variations as Toole's ingenuity suggested.

Even on those occasions when he was not mystifying the railway people with this language of his, he could not resist chaffing them. Once he arrived at a little station near Glasgow, and hearing the porter call out the name—Motherwell—he beckoned to him and said confidentially, "Very glad to hear it. And how's your father?"

Another time, at Bury St. Edmunds, he put his head out of the window and asked the guard, "When is the funeral?" "What funeral, sir?" replied the latter. "You know," said Toole, "the big funeral here." "I don't know of any funeral," answered the guard. "Oh," remarked Toole, with a disappointed air, "I thought we had come to *bury St. Edmund's.*

One of his most amusing entertainments in private was a mock lecture he used to deliver on zoology, pointing with a long stick to the imaginary animals round him, and giving a comic dissertation on the appearance and habits of each. I do not recollect much about it except the fact that it was very funny, and always made us roar with laughter.

Corney Grain and George Grossmith were in many respects the very reverse of each other. Leaving the difference in their size out of the

question—the former must have weighed at least four times what the latter did, as many of my readers may remember—Grain was rather reserved, not to say dull in society, and kept his sparkle and wit for the platform ; whereas Grossmith, amusing as he was on the stage, was even more so off it. By-the-by, the way in which the little comedian used to imitate the voice and manner of his big colleague was one of the best and most ludicrous pieces of mimicry I ever heard.

My friendship with Grossmith (or Gee-Gee, as he was familiarly called) was a long and intimate one, and many are the recollections of the jovial times I spent in his company.

He was not exactly witty, though he often said funny things; he was more like an overgrown schoolboy, brimming over with light-heartedness, and ready for any piece of mischief or any spontaneous and often ridiculous act that his irrepressible spirits prompted him to do. But it was all so harmless, so infectious, that one could not help laughing with him and joining in the fun. He was, in fact, what the French call an inveterate *farceur*, and if the opportunity for a joke of some kind were not ready to hand, he made one. One day I was walking with him on the promenade in Brighton, when a soldier in his scarlet uniform came strutting proudly along on the other side of the road. As soon as Grossmith saw him what must he do but cross over, put on his pince-nez—he was naturally near-sighted—and going close up to the man, take a letter out of his pocket as if in

the act of posting it; then, pretending suddenly to find out his mistake, he said in a most apologetic manner, "I beg your pardon. I thought you were a pillar-box!"

On another occasion we were staying together at a friend's house in the country, and one evening after dinner, the ladies being missing for a long time, he went to his room and found the door locked. Guessing they were engaged in what is commonly called "making hay," he suggested that the men of the party should pretend to be on the point of retiring for the night, and that as soon as we should hear the door open, we should appear suddenly before the delinquents, as if disturbed by the noise, and give them a shock. So we accordingly attired ourselves in our night garments over our other clothes, Grossmith borrowing one that was much too long for him and trailed on the ground (this was before the days of pyjamas), and waited patiently. Then, when the ladies had at last finished their mischievous task, we came out into the corridor with lighted candles in our hands—eight or ten absurd-looking visions in white—and presented ourselves to their astonished gaze. The shock to their nerves, however, was only momentary, and when they discovered that our attire was after all not so improper as they at first thought it was, they laughed heartily over the whole thing, and so did we. I shall have occasion to mention more of his comic doings presently, but what I have said about him and my other actor friends of the period is sufficient for the moment to show of what lively

material the Savage and Green Room Clubs were then composed.

Another small Club of which I was a member was the Oasis. It was a sort of miniature Savage, got up by young aspirants in literature and journalism, but differed from its elder brother inasmuch as the dinner element was the chief and, indeed, the only object of its meetings, there being no other form of entertainment, except occasionally some very bad speeches. Why it was called the Oasis I do not know. Its only connection, as far as I could see, with anything appertaining to the desert was that its members, being hard workers, had to be always up and *be-dooin'* (readers, please forgive the pun), and that its name suggested a spot where after the heat and toil of the day liquid refreshment was to be obtained. The Club did not last very long. I expect it found a difficulty in living up to its name, or else those of its members who were not too much occupied in fighting the sandstorms of a hard daily life became rather too partial to the material comforts the oasis brought them, and took to quenching their thirst oftener than was necessary at its somewhat potent "springs." In any case, it led a struggling and straggling existence for a year or two, then folded up its tents and was heard of no more.

I must mention one more place of social reunion that existed at this time, called the Salon. This was a periodical assembly of both sexes, with the usual little music and less refreshment. In this respect there was nothing out of the ordinary

about it. The real fun was unconsciously supplied by the members themselves. It was in the days of Sullivan's "Patience" and the so-called æsthetic craze, when women wore bilious-looking, ill-fitting costumes and struck strange attitudes, and everyone belonging to the cult thought that gazing on a lily was all the sustenance necessary for both mind and body. They took themselves very seriously, like the post-impressionists of to-day (whose efforts, by the way, especially as regards the women, they resembled not a little), and like these artists, too, they failed to see the humour of their proceedings.

But we outsiders didn't, and to watch them as they glided affectedly about the rooms, absorbed in admiration of each other, was as humorous a form of entertainment as one could desire.

This Club, also, was not very long lived. The craze gradually waned, and as soon as its devotees took to rational attire again, and left off their unsubstantial, flowery diet, the *raison d'être* of the meetings was gone, and they were given up.

Amusing as all these Clubs and semi-public gatherings were, the social evenings spent in private among one's own friends were still more so

I think if the present generation could have seen us on some of these occasions, throwing all formality to the winds and acting like little children let loose at playtime, they would often have thought us only fit for a lunatic asylum. I remember one evening in my own house that was specially typical of the frivolous way in which we used to behave. On the evening in question, there

being naturally a good many of my own colleagues present, we began with a little high-class music, just for decency's sake ; but this was soon voted too dull, and was put aside for other and livelier amusements.

These commenced with a duet between George Grossmith and myself, in which I imitated on the piano one of those little old-fashioned barrel-organs, very much out of tune, whilst he, with a long bell rope tied round his waist, impersonated the organ-grinder's monkey, going through all that animal's well-known, if not always elegant, antics, and finally landing on his wife's lap, from which place of refuge he had to be forcibly carried in the arms of one of the company and set down in a chair. After this, Trebelli got up and gave us a most thrilling recitation in Italian, founded almost entirely on the cardinal numbers of that language, *uno*, *due*, *tre*, and so forth, which was rendered all the more absurd by her ultra-dramatic manner, giving those who did not understand a word the impression that she was narrating some tragic event in the history of her country, or the sad tale of some lovelorn maiden's unrequited affections. When this was over, Grossmith, having recovered from his previous exertions, and his brother Weedon performed their famous scene at the dentist's. George was the patient and Weedon the operator. It was all very realistic, or would have been so, but for the unfortunate fact that the only apparatus obtainable was a pair of tongs, which did duty for the dentist's forceps, and a piece of cardboard about six inches

long, that represented the poor patient's extracted tooth.

Then Toole gave us his zoological lecture, and Arthur Cecil his sermon on the confectionery text.

But the most laughable thing of the whole evening was a grand impromptu operatic duet sung by Trebelli and Grossmith. This, like her recitation, was also in Italian. The words of the duet were not high-class poetry; as a matter of fact, they were made up of the titles of popular operas and the first lines of the best-known *arias* out of the same. Grossmith's voice was very small and his knowledge of the language purely elementary, but what he did know he made good use of, and he managed to hold his own throughout the performance with such eloquent ejaculations as "Trovatore!" "Il balen!" "Il segreto per esser felice!" etc., to which Trebelli would respond in her big contralto tones, "Traviata!" "Oh, mio Fernando!" "Ah, che la morte!" and other equally touching phrases. As to the melodies (?) and recitatives, these were invented on the spur of the moment by the artists themselves, and were certainly highly original, being utterly unlike any other music I ever heard. This, however, only improved the general effect of the performance, which grew more and more exciting as it proceeded, until it at last culminated in a grand cadenza for both voices, that ended their efforts and brought down the house.

The only drawback to the whole thing was that the accompanist (myself), not having rehearsed

beforehand, often had a difficulty in following the singers' unexpected harmonies and modulations. We had many similar evenings to the above. One of these is also particularly impressed on my memory, not so much on account of what we did as for the preliminary amusement it afforded. It was a party in celebration of my birthday, and I thought the occasion warranted my breaking out into poetry, so I wrote an invitation to my friends couched in the following pathetic language :

"There's a humble little dwelling not three miles from Charing Cross,
'Tis but five-and-twenty minutes (in a cab with decent horse).

"In this dwelling lives a minstrel (or composer, as he's styled),
Who, although he's always *Cowin'*, is both timid, meek, and mild.

"But, unlike that other bard, so famous in poetic lore,
He is not 'infirm or old,' although he reckons many a '*score.*'

"Now this minstrel labours day and night in solitary toil,
And, though free from journalistic '*whacks*,' still burns the midnight *oil.*

"Of kindly sympathizing friends he knows there is no lack,
But he seldom sees their faces, though they often see his *back.*

"No 'harp' has he to comfort him, nor any 'orphan boy,'
And, sick of '*scales*' in C (sea), he'd have no '*sole* remaining joy,'

"Did he not hope to see around his hearth those friends he owns,
And in '*common chord*' of friendship hear once more their kindly '*tones.*'

"Ah! dull is work without some play to ease the weary head;
Life's '*rôle*' should sometimes cheerful be while earning daily *bread.*

"So, when this minstrel's lines you read, if pity you have got,
Although your leisure hours be *few*, please come and cheer his *lot.*"

This poetical effusion acted as a wonderful incentive to my various friends to show what they, too, could do, and in consequence I received replies of all sorts, in verse, in poems, pen-and-ink sketches and caricatures, and so on; quite a little collection of curiosities. Among the best of the verses was a set by my old musical friend and colleague, Ebenezer Prout, which ran as follows:

"Dear Fred, I must apologize that I have been so long
Acknowledging receipt of your most kind and tuneful song.

"Until your letter came, I'd no idea you were a poet,
But one never knows what he can do until he is put *toe* it.

"At present, I regret to say, I am so very busy,
That the thought of all I have to do is enough to make me dizzy.

"I've six or seven volumes now waiting to be reviewed;
So if I cannot come to you, pray do not think me rude.

"I never shall get through unless I work with all my might,
And Sundays are the only times that I can get to write.

"The ride from Charing Cross may be a five-and-twenty minute,
But you're so far from Dalston that the very deuce is in it.

"So, regretting that I cannot find the leisure to get out,
Believe me, ever your sincerely,

"Ebenezer Prout."

Another amusing reply was one written by Arthur Cecil, after the style of "Hans Breitmann gave a Barty," a humorous and popular German-American poem of the period.

"We love, on Sundays, timid bard,
Our Schlafrock und Pantoffeln
Und Gänzebraten, not too hard,
Mit Dumplings von Kartoffeln.

"Bot when you sing, 'O come to me,'
R.S.V.P. by letter,
We let our roast und dumplings be,
For dat's anozzer matter.

"We know your timid ways of old,
Venn 'Cowin'' am Klaviere,
You make dose frightened minstrels bold,
Begeistert von your lyre.

"Dey sing like larks und nightingales,
Und make one jomp for bleasure,
Und die Erinnerung never fails,
Dose evenings op to dreasure.

"So for de 29th of Jan.,
Dat war-baint must be prightened,
Und alle Gäste, to a man,
Pe Komming—Don't be frightened!

"Dey come mit fiddle und musick,
Mit Scherz und Recitation;
We go mit you through dünn und dick,
Und like your invitation.

"For dere is joy und Heiterkeit
For all who 'come 'en masse,'
Zu drei und siebzig jederzeit
In Hamilton Terasse.

"So wet or fine, your barty we
Dat Sunday pe adorning;
But tap dat cask of nut-brown ale;
We shan't go home till morning!"

Among the sketches I received was one from David Murray (who had not then attained to the honours of a Royal Academician) of a Highlander playing the bagpipes, with the inscription "Weel trip it to the *Gowan*-lea," and another from Louis Wain of one of his inimitable cats, with its human-like wink, high collar, and eyeglass. There were also any number of other examples of my friends' unsuspected talents; some of them really humorous, and others in which the intention was better than the execution. The facetiousness of my guests, I should add, did not end with these contributions, for all during the eventful day I kept on receiving

telegrams from them saying how much they regretted that at the last moment they were prevented from coming to me. These telegrams became so numerous in the end that I began to "smell a rat." So, when the evening came, and they walked in smilingly, thinking to take me by surprise, I turned the tables on them by telling them that I had countermanded the supper, but that they were welcome to remain if they could put up with bread and cheese and any other frugal fare there happened to be in the house. The evening was much on the lines of the one I have already described, but in my honour, and as a special addition to our usual programme, Grossmith sang a parody on "The Better Land," and his wife recited some lines, also a parodied version of another song of mine called "The Unfinished Song."

I confess I was rather taken aback when Gee-Gee said he wanted to sing "The Better Land" to my own accompaniment, and thought at first that he meant it seriously, but I was soon undeceived, as everyone else was, when, after I had played the opening bars, he started as follows :

"'I hear thee speak of a Better Land,
Written by young Freddy Cowen's hand.
Mother, where did he get that tune?
Where did he steal it? oh, tell me soon!
Did it come from Handel's grand "Messiah"?
Or Charlie Gounod's "Āve Maria"?'
'Not there, not there, my child!'

"'Is it far away in some region old,
A Corelli jig that Fred Cowen "bowled"?
The copyright has long expired;
He could crib two bars and still be admired;

A cheque from Boosey would come in soon—
Is it there, dear mother, he stole that tune ?'
'Not there, not there, my child !'

"'I know where it came from, my gentle boy.
I know where he got it, that song of joy:
Down at the "Star" in the city, my dear;
But good little boys may not enter there—
The name of the song was "The Shoreditch Swell."
How he came to hear it I cannot tell,
But from that song in that Hall so grand
He certainly stole "The Better Land."
It was there, it was there, my child !"

Mrs. Grossmith's version of my other song was even less flattering. The words of the original I have almost forgotten, but I know they were about a worn-out old poet who was writing some verses in his garret, when the pen dropped from his hand, and he went to sleep, to wake again in another and a happier world, where the angels, feeling sorry about the unfinished state of his poem, added the last verse for him, to the sound of harplike chords and mysterious harmonies.

N.B.—I should like to say that, having been noted all my life for my extreme abstemiousness, I would beg my readers not to hurt my feelings by taking the parody's aspersion on my character too literally.

"The Unfinished Flask.

"The untouched music hopeless lay
About Fred Cowen's room;
He had been sitting all the day
Drinking alone in gloom.

"The hour approached for him to dine,
The eve was wellnigh night,
And fast and faster flowed the wine,
Till Fred was somewhat tight.

"Then slow and carefully he creeps,
He means to go downstairs;
The weak head droops, poor Cowen sleeps,
And soon forgets his cares.

"And near him, lying on the floor,
His incompleted task;
The wasted wine was running from
His loved, unfinished flask.

"But in the night F. H. C. woke,
Took up the flask again,
And all the quiet neighbours heard
Him go into the rain.

"And that same night he was run in,
As he went out to dine;
The gentle Bobby ('twas no sin)
Himself did end the wine!"

The above are a few examples of my friends' poetical (?) talents. I could give several more, but these pages are already beginning to look as if I were compiling a volume of comic verses, and it is about time that I should stop. Before returning, however, to the region of prose, I should like to quote one more set of doggerel verses (I might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb) that I have just come across, and that were written by an actor-friend, Eric Lewis, not for this birthday party of mine, but as a valedictory ode on my departure for Australia. They, too, were a parody on one of my songs, "I think of all thou art to me," the words of which, by-the-by, were also set later by Tosti, under the title of "For ever and for ever"—

"I think that shortly thou wilt be
Afloat upon the shining sea,
Be sure we'll often think of thee,
Of thee, dear Freddie Cowen!

"Our hearts are full of grief and woe
To think that you're obliged to go;
But 'tis for your own good, we know,
So, farewell, Freddie Cowen!

"Perchance when you the Powers have met,
Though contrary to etiquette,
Some dazzling honours you will get
(They'll be well-earned, Fred Cowen!)
You may return a Baronet,
And be Sir Frederic Cowen!

"Perchance when thou art far away
In that vast place, Australi-a,
Where our dark night is thy bright day,
Thou'lt think of us, Fred Cowen!
The girls out there are fair, they say—
Be careful, Freddie Cowen!

"Ah, no! we cannot bear the pain,
So come back soon to us again,
And bring us an Australian strain—
You can, you know, Fred Cowen.

"Ah! come back soon, we'll welcome thee
With cheers and huzzas, three times three;
Come back across the angry sea,
Come to the house called 'Amitee,'*
And all your friends will happy be—
Come back soon, Freddie Cowen!"

Ours was not by any means the only house where the frivolities I have been writing about took place. I can recall many other occasions in the homes of my friends, especially among artistic and professional circles, where we used to enjoy ourselves in the same light-hearted, informal manner.

One of the merriest evenings I ever spent was at Frank Burnand's. The then editor of *Punch* was himself full of fun and humour, and liked to surround himself with congenial souls; conse-

* The house we lived in for many years was called Amity House.

quently the comic element at his entertainments was always well to the fore. On this particular evening everyone was in the gayest of spirits, and vied with each other as to who should be chief in the absurdities that went on almost without cessation until the small hours of the morning. The principal feature of the evening was a memorable and unique performance of the overture to "Zampa." The orchestra was carefully selected from the ranks of the most inexperienced players I ever came across. Arthur Cecil and the two Grossmiths undertook the violins (about which instruments they knew absolutely nothing except the shape); there was also, I think, a flute which someone—I forget who—occasionally spat into without producing any sound; and Corney Grain conducted—for the first and only time in his life. The violoncello was entrusted to myself (where the instrument came from I cannot imagine, unless Burnand or one of his sons had once bought it as a curiosity out of some old furniture shop), and knowing at least which end of it should be uppermost and that it ought to be tuned in fifths, I managed to get on pretty well. Fortunately, the part was not very difficult, and consisted largely of D's, A's, and G's, which notes I attacked at every possible opportunity, with the air of a practised professional. My great trouble was when the music went into any other key; but as this usually happened, by a strange coincidence, when I was either occupied in tuning the strings or in blowing my nose, I got over the difficulty better than I expected. How

my brother performers got on I cannot say, as I was much too occupied with my own affairs to pay much attention to them ; but at all events I know we were none of us in the least disconcerted, and went our own way, regardless of our conductor's beat—which we knew was the correct method to adopt, as we had seen it done by some of the best orchestras of the day. We played the overture right through to the end (with occasional discordant sounds that were not in Herold's original score), and, like the cardinal's celebrated curse in "The Jackdaw of Rheims," "nobody seemed a penny the worse." In fact, we all, including the audience, enjoyed it immensely, and even my old master Benedict, who helped us on the piano, seemed as happy as if he were at one of his own Norwich Festivals, and, just for once, had something approaching to a smile on his countenance.

After the overture the Vokes family gave us a display of their celebrated dancing and high-kicking feats, which latter aroused considerable anxiety in our host's mind as to the probable fate of his chandelier and other ornaments.

Then, to wind up with, we had an impromptu scene from a pantomime, in which the amateur clown and pantaloon knocked each other about in the approved fashion, and performed tricks that took the shine *out* of Drury Lane Theatre and *off* Burnand's parquet floor.

Another occasion I remember well was a dinner party, also at Burnand's house, at which the Bancrofts, Tenniel, Linley Sambourne, and other

celebrities were present. Having no intention or desire to bore ourselves with the sort of conversation that usually attends the process of eating in company, we began almost as soon as we had seated ourselves at table to consider what form our evening's amusement should take. After various suggestions had been put to the vote, we decided to start with the intellectual occupation of drawing pigs with our eyes shut, stipulating that the award of excellence, as in a donkey race, should be given to the one whose efforts least resembled the animal in question. We made many trials at this, with the result that in the end Mrs. Bancroft (as she then was) and Sambourne were easy winners. The one difference between them was that the latter, who had a fair idea of what a much overfed pig was like, quite forgot that the eye really had some connection with its owner and did not travel in space, like a planet round the sun ; whereas Mrs. Bancroft, although her pig had evidently eaten nothing for several weeks, knew that this did not interfere materially with the place where his optical organ ought to be. So, after due consideration of these points, for and against the rival claimants, we felt there was nothing else to be done but to " tie " them for first place.

We next had a competition for the best sketch (this time with our eyes open) to be completed within five minutes, which was triumphantly carried off by Tenniel with a charming drawing of a lion's head. Then we gave each other riddles, and brain-wearing puzzles with matches and on paper, and

juggling feats with tumblers and wineglasses (which were more exciting than enjoyable to our hostess); and when we had exhausted all these, we took to playing "noughts and crosses" and "consequences," until, coffee and liqueurs having long since disappeared, it was time for us to do the same.

All that I have been relating was no doubt very frivolous, very childish (I started by saying that this was going to be a frivolous chapter), but it did us good, and kept our hearts young and our digestions in order. Nowadays the social world takes its pleasures in a different way, and, as I said before, I doubt whether it would enter into these trivial amusements now with the same zest that we used to do in the days before bridge and motor-cars were invented.

Even at that time there were a few cavillers who did not appreciate our innocent merriment, and thought it undignified. I was once at a Conference of Musicians, and having nothing better to do one evening some of us got up a mock orchestral concert, disguising ourselves in wigs and hideous masks, and using for our performance those little instruments (I think they are called *mirlitons*) into which one sings with a very peculiar and comic effect. We gave several standard pieces as well, or rather as badly, as we could in this curious manner, which were received with much laughter by the majority of the audience.

Then one of my colleagues and I improvised a duet (he with his *mirliton* and I at the piano) on a popular tune—I think it was "Yankee Doodle"

—inventing all sorts of variations on it in the various styles of the great composers, Bach, Mozart, Haydn, Wagner, and others. Neither of us had the least knowledge of what the other was going to do, and the fun (to us) consisted in trying to divine each other's intention and to follow it up in the most appropriate and amusing way we could. I think we must have succeeded pretty well, for we were greeted with great applause at the conclusion, and were vociferously encored. Another item that afforded much amusement was a little game I had invented for the purpose of showing what bad timists musical people really are. It is played in the following manner: You take a number of musicians—the more capable they are the greater the effect—and place them with their faces to the wall. Then, after you have counted one bar of slow common time out loud, ask them to continue in the same tempo for twelve more imaginary bars—that is to say, counting the beats in their minds only, and not aloud—and at the forty-eighth or last beat to turn round and clap their hands simultaneously—if they can!

My colleagues at the Conference tried it several times, but they were always woefully at sea before they came to the end, and the result in every case would have caused any metronome, even the most broken-down one, to blush with shame.

(I should like to try this game on, say, a dozen of our greatest conductors, and see how they got through the test.)

But in the midst of all these merry doings of

ours there were, as I have already hinted, some of our more sedate brethren who sat quite grave, without the semblance of a smile on their faces, and who looked as if they considered the whole proceedings very unbecoming to a serious gathering of musicians, and that the time would have been more profitably employed in reading a paper on voice production, or in discussing the reasons why chromatic scales are always used to portray every disturbance in Nature, from a storm down to a pain in one's internal economy.

A still more unfortunate instance of inability to see the humorous side of things was when I took the chair at a large meeting of the Tonic Sol-fa Association. They had evidently expected that I would look up the whole subject and give them a learned discourse on the merits of their system as compared with the old notation. I thought, however, that this sort of thing was rather overdone, and that, as a novelty, I would relieve the usual monotony of their meetings by trying to be funny. So I filled my speech with all the anecdotes and amusing remarks I could think of; telling them, amongst other things, that though I had often heard of their movable "do," I did not know much about it, the only movable "dough" with which I was practically acquainted being the sort that one gets from the baker!

My speech did not produce the effect I had hoped for. Indeed, I don't think they quite realized what I was talking about until I had finished, and then—an oppressive silence reigned

throughout the hall. It was the biggest failure in oratory I ever made, and that is saying a good deal. I did for myself completely that evening, as far as they were concerned, and I was never invited to take the chair for them again.

But these little "slaps in the face" were like passing clouds on a sunny day, and only made our enjoyment the greater by comparison.

I have said that the tendency of the present day is to take life *au grand serieux;* but I do not mean by this that the ability to amuse or to be amused has entirely vanished. It is only the way that has changed and sobered down. As to the artistic and musical world, though it may stand more on its dignity in social circles now than formerly, its gift of fun and humour, if of a less boisterous kind, undoubtedly still exists. Many of my brother-musicians have this gift largely developed. They can be very witty at times, to say nothing of the special aptitude they nearly all possess for that rather unjustly despised art of making puns.

It will not be out of keeping with the frivolous nature of this chapter if I conclude it with a few specimens of their most amusing, or some may think their most atrocious, efforts in this direction.

My friend Alexander Mackenzie (who is, perhaps, the most inveterate joker of us all) once said to me, with reference to an oratorio by Parry, when there was a question as to whether the work should be performed at the Albert Hall or the Queen's Hall, "I think it ought to be done at the latter place,

for what can be more appropriate than to give 'King Saul' in *Queen's 'all !*"

Another time we were at supper together after a Philharmonic Concert at which Debussy's "Afternoon of a Fawn" had been performed. Louis Wain, who was one of the party, took up the programme, and drew on it the picture of a cat listening intently, but from the signs of distress on its face evidently not enjoying itself. When this was shown to Mackenzie he promptly remarked: "I suppose this is *De-pussy* in the audience listening to Debussy in the orchestra !"

Here is one of Elgar's puns. When his overture "Cockaigne" was produced, I asked him which was the correct way to write the word, as some people spelt it "Cockaigne" and others "Cockayne"; to which he replied: "Oh, its *ether !*"

A very witty epigram was the one written by Moszkowski, the well-known composer. He was asked to put something in a friend's album, and on looking through it he saw that Bülow had written the following lines. (These and Moszkowski's I am afraid I must give in the original French, as they do not bear translation.)

> "Bach, Beethoven, Brahms—
> Tous les autres sont des *cretins !*"

Underneath this Moszkowski immediately wrote:

> "Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, Moszkowski—
> Tous les autres sont des *chrétiens !*"

Richter, when he was first learning to speak English, used to be celebrated for his unconsciously

funny remarks. Once, when he was rehearsing, he said to the orchestra, with regard to some *pizzicato* passage: "Gentlemen, you must not play that with the nails of your fingers, but with the *meat*" (which was the only equivalent he could think of for the German word *fleisch*).

Again, he was asked one day by a friend how his wife was, to which he answered: "She is not at all well. When she do not *lie*, she *schwindles!*" (meaning, of course, that she became giddy).

Another time he and his wife were invited to stay in the country with some friends; he had to return to town the same evening, but his wife was to remain there for some days. On going to the booking-office at the station he said: "I vant two ticketts to ——, one for me to come back, and one for my wife—*not* to come back!"

An amusing story is that of the German professor who was accompanying a singer at a concert somewhere in the provinces. After she had finished, he bluntly remarked to her: "You not sing zat song at all nicely, no expression, no varmz, nozings!" "I am very sorry," she said stiffly; "but I sing as God taught me." He was rather hard of hearing, but not wishing her to think that he had not caught all she said, he replied: "I not know ze name of your master before, but whoever he vas, he teach you very badly!"

One more example. A composer, who shall be nameless, was once talking with some friends about the prejudice of the Germans against English music, and the somewhat strained relations that

existed at the time between the two countries. Someone remarked that he could not understand the reason for this anti-British feeling ; on the contrary, he thought there ought to be a strong affinity, as in our origin at least we also belonged to a considerable extent to the Teutonic races. Whereupon the composer said : " I don't think the reason has anything to do with our being *too-tonic ;* it is probably because we are too *dominant !*"

CHAPTER XI

Voyage to Australia—Arrival in Melbourne—David Lee and his friend—The musical scheme of the Exhibition—Curious performance of "Tannhaüser" Overture—Opening ceremony—Sir Henry and Lady Loch—The Australian workman—The music at the Exhibition—Unprecedented series of concerts—Appreciation of the audiences—Squatter's opinion of "Ruth"—Trip to Sydney and the Yenolan Caves—Sydney Harbour—First acquaintance with Phil May—Humorous menu at a luncheon party—Adventure at a river picnic—The Melbourne Cup—Demonstration at the close of the Exhibition—Orchestral concerts in Sydney—Establishment of a permanent orchestra in Melbourne—Parry's desire to be its conductor—My return to England.

At the end of May, 1888, my brother and I left for Australia. I had persuaded him to accompany me, feeling that I should be less lonely during the long absence from home if I had a member of my family with me. We travelled overland to Naples, where we joined the boat. It was my first experience of a long sea voyage, the one to America a few years previously hardly coming under that category, nor can I reckon that still earlier one I took from Jamaica as a little child, of which I have nothing but the faintest recollection.

After I had settled down and got my sea-legs on, I enjoyed it very much. There were one or two slight drawbacks. Our boat, the *Austral*, had gained some notoriety from having sunk not long

before in Sydney Harbour while loading, or shifting her cargo. When she rose again from the deep I fancy she must have brought an extra collection of rats with her, for they abounded on board, and ran races with each other along the corridors and into the cabins; not ordinary frugal rats that were satisfied with the humble fare that the hold provided for them, but regular epicures of rats, who only cared for a menu composed of the passengers' boots, the strings of tennis-rackets, and other similar dainty and luxurious morsels. We also had a plentiful supply of cockroaches with us, varying in size from that of a pin's head to the fully developed insect so much "sought after" in domestic circles. Their favourite place of assembly was in the berths, and at first, not being accustomed to their society, we should have preferred if they had chosen the kitchen or the steward's pantry for their nightly promenade; but after a day or two, we let them have their own way—that is to say, we used to sweep them off, get into bed, and turn out the light, leaving them to return to their old haunts or not as they liked.

If anyone asked me to go through the Red Sea again in June I should certainly decline with thanks, unless I were allowed to spend the time in the ship's refrigerator. I never felt such heat before or since, and the mere thought of it, even after twenty-five years, makes me perspire. For several days and nights we never ventured near our cabins, and lived practically on deck and lemon squashes. Fortunately, the perpetual Turkish bath I was in did not affect me seriously as it did some

of the other passengers. The only thing that did happen to me was that I put myself in my deck-chair one afternoon about five o'clock, intending to have just a little nap before the first dinner bell rang, when, lo and behold! after what I thought was but a few minutes, I certainly did hear the bell ring—but it was for breakfast the next morning! I had slept from sheer exhaustion for fifteen hours without once waking. But, except for these minor discomforts, I found the life on board, with its six or seven meals a day and other simple pleasures, very agreeable and restful, as indeed most people do, I believe, whose internal arrangements are proof against any of those antics, in and out of the water, in which a frolicsome ship, such as ours was, delights to indulge.

I had with me a number of instrumentalists (I think there were sixteen of them) who had been engaged as principals for the Exhibition orchestra. They formed quite a nice little band in themselves, and we occasionally regaled our fellow-passengers with orchestral selections, which were a decided relief from the ordinary amateur concert, and were much appreciated. Our other daily amusements I need not enter into, as they were of the usual sort common to all long sea voyages; but I must not fail to mention the barber we had with us, for he was quite a character, and we used to invent every excuse we could to visit him so as to "draw him out," and have a good laugh at his expense. His most amusing peculiarity was the way he had of never using a short word when a long one would

do, and this habit he employed not only when telling funny stories, at which he was a thorough adept, but also in ordinary conversation. One day, when the ship was rolling a good deal, I asked him if he was not afraid sometimes of his razor slipping while he was shaving the passengers, to which he replied: "I have circumnavigated this terrestial globe multifarious times in the exercise of my lowly calling, and I have never yet lacerated anyone's cuticle."

Apart from all this, there was much else on the journey to interest a novice like myself. The glimpses of Eastern life at Port Said and Aden; the immense expanse of the desert (we were favoured with a genuine sandstorm while going through the Canal); the beautiful colouring of the rocks on the Red Sea shores; the tropical vegetation of Ceylon; the whales with their "fountains" at play; the myriads of flying-fish and porpoises; and the wonderful phosphorescence of the water at night—all these things were new to me, and a constant source of interest and pleasure. Altogether, the four weeks at sea were very enjoyable, and I was quite sorry when they came to an end.

On our arrival at Adelaide a message came from the Governor of South Australia, Sir William Robinson, asking me to break my journey there and stay a few days with him, but I did not accept the invitation. The fact is, it was so rough in the harbour that the passengers could not disembark in the usual way, but had to be suspended in chairs by a crane and let down on to the little tug that

lay tossing about violently alongside. If they reached the deck when it wasn't there, so to speak (as often happened), they had to be hauled up again and the process repeated, until they discovered the precise mathematical moment at which the chair and the deck were in one and the same spot, when they got out and sat down on board the tug —sometimes before they intended to. After watching one or two of these aerial excursions, I decided to continue my journey by sea.

We were met at the port of Melbourne by the Exhibition Commissioners and the heads of the local musical societies, and taken up the river in a Government launch to the city.

An amusing incident occurred the first evening after my arrival. I should mention that there was, not unnaturally, a slight feeling of jealousy at first among the Melbourne musicians and their partisans, that the Government should have selected a conductor from the old country instead of entrusting the post to one of themselves. This feeling, I ought to say, was directed more against the principle of the thing than against myself personally; my colleagues invariably showed me every attention in their power, and whatever inward grievance they may have had, it never made any difference in our friendly intercourse. Indeed, it was only from an occasional hint, such as the one to which I am about to refer, that I knew that anything of the sort had ever existed.

Well, we were taking a stroll after dinner, in company with the Secretary of the Exhibition, when,

on going into one of the small restaurants, or saloon bars as I think they were called, we met the city organist, David Lee, to whom I was formally introduced. While we were conversing, there arrived on the scene an amateur friend of the latter, evidently very much under the influence of musical ecstasy and something still stronger. Not knowing who I was, he at once began addressing the Secretary as follows: "What the dickensh do you mean by bringing thish man Cowen over when my friend here bloomin' besht conductor in colony? I bet you shoverin' Lee give him pointsh reading score and beat him 'ollow!" Poor David Lee was naturally very embarrassed, and tried to stop him from saying more; but we thought the fun too good to be lost, so encouraged him to continue unburdening his soul, which he did to the bitter end. Then we departed, leaving the pair to talk the matter over as rationally as the circumstances of the moment permitted.

Melbourne, when I visited it, was already a fine city. There were still traces of its rapid growth in the little shanties and somewhat tumbledown-looking dwellings (demolished long ere this, I imagine) that existed in some places side by side with more modern houses; but its wide main streets with their life and animation, its many handsome buildings, and its charming suburbs, all gave it an appearance that was very pleasing and attractive.

I was much fascinated by the cable tramcars, which were the first horseless vehicles I had ever

seen. Many other things seemed also very curious to me until I got accustomed to them. For instance, the moon began with her crescent on the right side and finished with it on the left, and when I thought it was new moon it was the last quarter, and *vice versa*. The trees (at least the indigenous ones) were too lazy to shed their leaves, so that there was nothing but the calendar and the thermometer to tell me when it was spring or when it was autumn. Christmas, with its mixture of plum-pudding, green peas, and roses, was another unusual experience. Then the wind behaved very strangely, and persisted in blowing cold from the south, and hot from the north, which was against everything I had been taught to believe in my youth ; and in the same perverse way the sunny side of the house was in quite the opposite direction to where one expected it to be (this I fortunately found out before I went into private apartments). I got very confused at first over all these antipodal tricks of Nature, and should not have been astonished had I heard that the sun rose in the west and set in the east ; but Providence was good enough to save me this extra worry.

For the first month of my stay I was occupied with orchestral and choral rehearsals, the former every day, and the latter one or two evenings in each week. In consequence, my forces were in capital working order by the time the Exhibition opened.

The musical scheme organized by the Executive Commissioners was in many respects quite unique. Melbourne had hitherto enjoyed but few oppor-

tunities of hearing good orchestral music, and the Government wisely resolved, to quote the words of their own official record of the Exhibition, to introduce "a series of concerts in which, with a view of making them at once a source of attraction and an educational factor, should be presented to the public not only the standard classics of the great masters, but also the best works of modern composers, interspersed with pieces of a light and agreeable character, yet possessing artistic value. It was anticipated that not only would these concerts be a source of pleasure to those visiting the Exhibition, but that the stimulation of a love of good music for its own sake, and the consequent elevation of the public taste, would amply repay the expenditure that would necessarily be incurred."

With this purpose in view they engaged the best instrumentalists they could find in Australia and New Zealand, besides those I brought with me from home, and thus got together an orchestra of about seventy-five players (with a first-rate local violinist, George Weston, as leader), which, if in some cases it left a little to be desired on the score of individual merit, made ample amends for this by the precision of ensemble and technique it gained through the four weeks' preliminary practice.

The choir, numbering nearly seven hundred, was also excellent, with young fresh voices, especially among the sopranos and contraltos. At my first choral rehearsal they presented me with an illuminated address, containing beautifully executed pictures of scenes from some of my works and

the signatures of all the members. They carried their welcome still further, and expressed a wish to shake hands with me, so I had to stand for over half an hour at the close while the whole seven hundred passed in front of me, going through this flattering but tiring ordeal like some royal personage holding a levee.

I had also taken out with me, at the Government's request, a large library of the best-known works in the orchestral repertory. So it will be seen that they spared no expense in their endeavours to make the concerts as successful as possible.

My time, when not at work, was taken up with those various entertainments, public and private, which the people of the colonies delight to shower upon the stranger to their shores. On all sides I received the greatest kindness and hospitality, and everyone seemed anxious to make my stay as agreeable socially as I already felt it was going to be artistically. In fact, their zeal to honour English music in my person was once or twice carried further than was necessary. I was invited one evening shortly after my arrival to attend an orchestral concert given by a local conductor, and on entering the hall, I found myself placed, to my dismay, not in an ordinary seat like the rest of the audience, but in a large gilt arm-chair in the front of the stalls ; and in that position I had to remain throughout the concert, looking, and feeling remarkably foolish. I shall always remember the occasion for another reason as well, and that was the strange

performance of one of the items in the programme —namely, the Overture to "Tannhaüser." The piece had proceeded fairly well—though the *tempi* were certainly unconventional and the difficulties rather too much for the players—until it came towards the end where the brass enters *fortissimo* with the Pilgrims' Song. Here the poor trumpets and trombones missed their entry, and, being unable to find their place again, gave up altogether, with the result that for the remaining fifty or sixty bars of the piece we had nothing but the descending semi-quaver passages in the violins, without so much as a vestige of the melody. The effect was more extraordinary than beautiful. I knew I was expected to go round afterwards and congratulate the conductor, but I saved my conscience by telling him with absolute truth that "I had never heard such a performance of the overture before!"

Another well-meant but embarrassing occasion was when I went on an off night to the pantomime and saw the clown, got up to resemble myself and with a mock orchestra round him, go through a ludicrous performance in imitation of one of our own concerts. It was very funny, I admit, but though a caricature may be in a sense a very flattering thing to the person caricatured, it is difficult to remain unconcerned and to pretend to be someone else when the audience is looking alternately from the stage to your box, and laughing heartily at your discomfiture.

A form of hospitality it took me some time to get used to was the desire every new male acquain-

tance had to drink my health. As I was being introduced every day to some dozen or so of these, and as it would have deeply offended them to refuse, I found this friendly custom of theirs rather disturbing to my constitution. But I hit upon a successful plan at last. I used to put about a teaspoonful of spirit into my glass, fill it up with water, and, when they were not looking, pour most of it on to the floor. In this manner I was able to drink with them to their heart's content and walk home perfectly straight afterwards ; and I got the name for having the strongest head in the colony.

The opening ceremony at the Exhibition took place on the first of August, and was quite a fine spectacle. Our programme included the National Anthem, the Hallelujah Chorus, a Prize Cantata by a local composer of the name of King, and my own " Song of Thanksgiving," which I had written earlier in the year expressly for the occasion. At the conclusion of the ceremony I was taken up to the dais and formally presented to the Governor, Sir Henry (afterwards Lord) Loch, with whom, however, and Lady Loch, I was already on terms of very pleasant friendship.

It will not be out of place to say here that both Sir Henry and his wife were exceedingly popular in the position they occupied, and deservedly so, for they were charming people, quite without ceremony in their private surroundings, and on more public occasions exhibiting that tact and courteousness to one and all which are, or should be, such

essential qualities in an ideal representative of the Crown. He was a tall, fine-looking man, and had had a rather romantic history, for, in his earlier years, during our war with China, he had been taken prisoner by the Chinese while engaged in some important British negotiations, and condemned to be executed in barbarous and horrible fashion, his release being only accomplished through influence and after many days of anxious and fearful suspense.

On the evening after the inaugural ceremony a musical reception was given to the various Commissioners from all parts, and the next day to this saw the commencement of our long series of concerts, which were continued almost without interruption for a period of six months. The concert hall, with its large platform and organ, occupied the whole of one end of the nave. At first it was open at the back and under the galleries to the rest of the building, but this was soon discovered to be a serious defect, and it was then boarded in all round, and movable screens, with a tilted sound-board to meet them, placed just behind the orchestra, which contrivances could be easily removed when the whole of the large platform was required for the chorus. These improvements added greatly to the acoustic properties of the hall, but the carrying out of them, together with the installation of the electric light that had been delayed, was a source of much annoyance to us for several days. The Australian labourer cared as little then for other people's convenience as ours

does now, and it mattered nothing to him whether his operations formed a pleasing *obbligato* to our music or not. I was able, though, to give him a good lesson, which he probably remembered for a long time. One evening, just as I had begun my programme, a dreadful noise of hammering was heard overhead. I put down my baton and stopped; so did the noise. Thinking it was over, I began again; it did the same. This playful little duet between us continued for some time; then I sent for a messenger and requested him to go to the workmen and remind them politely in my name that there was a concert going on beneath them. The audience meanwhile waited patiently. After about ten minutes, during which time the hammering grew more and more persistent, the messenger returned, and I said to him, "Did you give them my message?" "Yes, sir," he replied. "Are you sure you told them that Mr. Cowen the conductor sent you?" "Yes, sir." "And what was their answer?" "They said: 'Tell Mr. Cowen to go to the d——l! We've got our contract to finish by a certain time, and we ain't going to stop for no concert or nobody.'" Upon this, I turned to the audience and said: "Ladies and gentlemen, as you have possibly noticed, there has been a fight between labour and art. Labour has won. I am very sorry, and I wish you all good-night." Then I dismissed the orchestra, and there was no concert that evening.

(This little contretemps and that other one, when my overture was so abruptly stopped at the

Liverpool Exhibition, make me feel rather proud of the record I really fancy I must hold—to use an Irishism—as a conductor of unplayed music.)

I was afraid that on this eventful night I might perhaps have exceeded my authority, but, fortunately, I happened to meet several of the chief officials immediately afterwards at a reception, and told them what I had done; and as they all heartily approved, my mind was set at rest. My action, moreover, had a pronounced effect, for whether the men were reprimanded or surprised into obedience by the unusual interference, the fact remains that we were never again disturbed; and it was most amusing to watch them waiting cautiously with their saws or hammers in their hands, ready to resume work the very instant the last note of a rehearsal or concert had been played.

From the time the Exhibition opened until the end of the season—with the exception of one week's holiday—I was kept even harder at work than before. We had on the average ten performances a week. On Tuesday and Saturday afternoons we gave symphony concerts (the Tuesday programme being repeated in the evening); Thursday evenings were devoted to choral works; and the remaining concerts were of a miscellaneous character. The total number was something over 260, a succession of high-class performances that I believe to be unparalleled in the history of music. In addition to the concerts, I had three or four rehearsals each week with the orchestra, and one with the choir, Wednesday evenings being set aside

for this latter purpose. All the musical details were also under my own supervision, such as making out the programmes, compiling the analytical notes, engaging the artists, etc. At the only meeting of the Commissioners that I was asked to attend, one of them proposed that we should occasionally play in the open air, and another suggested that we should wear uniforms and peaked caps ; but I succeeded in convincing them that we had no connection with brass bands, so after that they left me alone and gave me *carte blanche* to do as I pleased—which is, after all, the most sensible way to treat a conductor. Our programmes were constituted according to the Government's original scheme, and comprised nearly every well-known symphony and overture, besides lighter music such as ballet suites, *entr'actes*, etc., and a good many other modern works by British and foreign composers. The choral works we performed were—"The Messiah," "Elijah," "The Creation," Beethoven's Choral Symphony, Rossini's "Stabat Mater," Sullivan's "Golden Legend," and my own "Ruth" and "Sleeping Beauty." Many of these received more than one performance, so as to allow us the requisite time to prepare the others, such favourites as "The Messiah" and "Elijah" being given at least four or five times during the season.

Our vocalists were, on the whole, excellent. Chief among them were Mrs. Palmer (soprano), Mme. Christian (a contralto who had studied in England), and Armes Beaumont (tenor). The

latter was a sort of local Sims Reeves ; a thoroughly experienced artist whose voice, it is true, was no longer in its prime, but who sang with admirable taste and enthusiasm. He had the misfortune to be nearly blind, but the way in which he learnt any music, with the aid of a powerful magnifying glass, and sang it from memory, as he did everything else, was most remarkable. The instrumental talent was not quite on the same level, but we were able sometimes to enlist the services of some artist who was on a visit to the colony, and thus secure a good rendering of a concerto—notably, the performance we had of Beethoven's E flat Concerto by Madeline Schiller, a pianist of considerable reputation in her day.

The fears that were entertained in some quarters that all this good music would prove *caviare* to the multitude were found to be groundless. Just at first the public treated us like one of the side-shows, and used to saunter in, hear a piece or two, and walk out again. But before long all this was changed, and they crowded into the hall day after day, listening intently to every note, and never stirring until it was all over—as appreciative an audience as one could desire anywhere. Even such long symphonies as the "Eroica," Schubert's in C, or Berlioz's "Fantastique," did not seem to weary them, but, on the contrary, were welcomed as enthusiastically as everything else. Wagner's music was always a great attraction. In order to ascertain whether this taste for the art was really genuine or only the fashion of the moment, we

took a plebiscite when midway through the season, by means of voting papers distributed among the audience on three separate occasions, in order to give every class of visitors the opportunity of showing its preferences. The works which received the highest number of votes were the Pastoral symphony, the overtures to "Tannhaüser" and "Rienzi," Liszt's First Rhapsody, and Handel's Largo. This selection, if not entirely in keeping with ultra-modern ideas, was one that would have done, and would even still do, credit to any community.

It was estimated, I believe, that the number of people who attended the concerts from first to last was about half a million. The scheme being as I have stated, an educational one, the pecuniary part of it was a matter of indifference to the Government. The public, on payment of their shilling admission to the Exhibition, were free to listen to the music as often as they liked, the only regular charges being for the choral nights, and for a few front seats at the other concerts. Taking into account the receipts accruing from these charges, the result was a loss of £9,000 on a total expenditure of about £28,000. This loss, however, can scarcely be reckoned a real one, for as many thousands of visitors were certainly attracted to the Exhibition solely by the music, the deficit must have been nearly met, or at least very considerably reduced, by the extra admission receipts that would not otherwise have been forthcoming.

There were, of course, a few visitors, more

especially among the country-folk, who came to hear us chiefly out of curiosity, and who did not find the concerts particularly interesting. One very warm day my attention was drawn by our leader to a man, evidently from the Bush, who was seated calmly in the front row of the stalls, with his arms folded complacently as he leaned back and his eyes closed in peaceful slumber. He had taken off his boots, and placed them neatly together on the floor beside him, and with yellow worsted stockings covering his large feet, made a picture such as I had never seen before at a place of entertainment. I do not know how long he remained, for when I next had time to look round, he and the boots had vanished.

At another of the concerts, after we had played the "Egmont" Overture, "Lohengrin" Prelude, and a Brahms Hungarian Dance, a man in the gallery who had been listening carefully to these pieces in the hope of finding some tune that he could whistle afterwards, was heard to remark to a friend, "Oh, I say, Bill, let's go; they're all alike!" Amusing criticisms like the above were not confined to this class, but even the well-to-do people from "up-country" would sometimes express their opinions in a very original and diverting manner.

After a performance of my oratorio, "Ruth," a friend of mine asked a rich squatter, who had been present, how he liked the work, to which he replied: "My dear fellow, it was simply lovely! It reminded me all the while of weaning-time among my sheep: first the old ewe (meaning the

contralto) got up and said, 'Baa!' then the old ram (the tenor) got up and answered, 'Baa! Baa!' then all the lambs behind the fences (the choir) cried, 'Baa! Baa! Baa!' You tell Cowen to come out to my place and I will show him how musical the sheep are." This was the only way he knew of expressing his satisfaction, and it was intended to be very complimentary.

I received another very subtle compliment one day from no less important a person than a policeman. I was going out of the building and had just lit a cigarette inside the main entrance, when he came up to me and said: "You know you mustn't smoke here, sir." "Well," said I, "why don't you lock me up? It would give me a nice holiday." "I wish I *could* run you in for a week, sir," was his answer; "it would be the making of me in my profession!"

I really wanted a holiday very badly after three months' hard work, but I did not dare ask for it. However, Sir Henry Loch kindly came to my rescue and obtained permission for me to go with him to New South Wales on a short trip that he himself was about to take. Arrangements were made for a few orchestral concerts under the direction of one of my choral sub-conductors, and also for some other miscellaneous performances, so that the Exhibition should not be entirely without music during my week's absence.

The trip was very enjoyable. We were a pleasant little party of four—Sir Henry, a friend of his, his equerry, and myself. Our first destina-

tion was Sydney, where we arrived early in the morning, and were driven to Government House in a carriage and four, with postilions, outriders, and an escort of New South Wales Cavalry. I had often envied those celebrated *prime donne* who had the horses taken out of their carriages and were dragged along the road by enthusiastic students; but after this I looked down upon such trifling occurrences with contempt. It is true the honour was not exactly meant for myself; still, I managed to suppress this humiliating thought, and I felt all the time as if I ought to be bowing at regular intervals to an admiring crowd in the usual fashion adopted by Royalty. We lunched with Lord Carrington, the then Governor of the Colony (whom I had often met in earlier days at the Bohemian Club and other places), and started again in the afternoon for Katoomba, where we slept. The next day we travelled by train for a couple of hours through charming country, and down the celebrated zigzag railway (we did this part of the journey on the engine itself so as to get a better view) to a place called Tarana, and from thence we had a drive of nearly six hours to the Yenolan Caves, picnicking on the way. This drive was mostly through the Bush, and gave me a good idea of Australian scenery in general, with its parrots flying from tree to tree, its kangaroos, and its laughing jackasses (these are birds, not animals).

I may say *en passant* that the parrots in Australia are not good talkers, but many of them are splendid whistlers. While in the refreshment

room of a station on our way to Sydney I heard an air from "La Fille de Madame Angot" being whistled over and over again in the most delightful perky manner possible. I could not imagine at first who it was, but the sound continuing, I looked round and saw a beautiful, long-tailed parrot, strutting up and down in his cage, and evidently very proud of himself, the while he kept on repeating the eight or sixteen bars of the popular tune. I asked the man if he would part with the bird, but he said he would not do so for a hundred pounds. It was a pity, for I should like to have had it, if only as a set-off against the singing and piano-playing of some of my neighbours.

To resume. On arriving at the Caves the whole household (there was nothing there at the time but the one hotel) turned out to give the Governor three cheers, and the place was prettily decorated with ferns and flowers that grew all around in profusion. We spent the following day in visiting the Caves, which, with the strange formations and colourings of their stalactites, impressed me as being very wonderful. Although not yet fully excavated, they were already very extensive, and were acknowledged to rival in beauty those other similar subterranean places at Kentucky and Rochefort. On leaving there we had another lovely drive to Mount Victoria, through the Blue Mountains and amidst some very pretty scenery ; then back to Sydney, where we finished up our little trip with a two-days' stay at Government House.

I found Sydney very attractive, not so much the

town itself as its renowned harbour and charming surroundings. Nothing could be more picturesque than the view I had from my windows, with the clear, blue water, the many ships, the encircling hills and semi-tropical vegetation. The word "harbour" is rather a misnomer. Its numerous little islands, with their still tinier creeks and bays, in some places dotting its surface all over, in others almost shutting in its narrow shores, give it much more the appearance of some placid inland lake, far away from, and unwotted of, the sea: indeed, in these characteristics it reminded me not a little of another scarcely less beautiful spot—the fiord at Christiania.

The people of Sydney are naturally very proud of their harbour, and the story goes that in former times, whenever strangers arrived, there was always such an anxious desire to know what they thought of it, that they at last adopted the device of pinning a placard on the front of their coats with the words, I ADMIRE YOUR HARBOUR VERY MUCH, written in large letters on it, and thus saved themselves the fatigue of replying to this constantly recurring question. I neglected to do this, but I took care to tell them at every opportunity that I thought it very lovely, which was the truth.

On my return to Melbourne I at once took up my duties again, and stuck to them closely for the remaining three months. But the work, if arduous, was congenial; and I found relaxation from it in the evenings (that is to say, after ten o'clock), when I used either to attend some social function, or

foregather quietly with friends at a restaurant or at the Yorick Club, of which I was a member. It was at this Club that I first came across Phil May. He was working for one of the chief illustrated papers, and had already made a name for himself in the colonies as a caricaturist. I met him frequently afterwards at one place or another, and his goodness of heart, simple nature, readiness to help everyone but himself—in fact, all those very qualities which were, alas! later on to prove his undoing—made him a general favourite with us all. Although his genius had not yet developed on those amusingly original lines which, after his return to England, made him so famous, he possessed even then a wonderful quickness of pen and keen perception of humour. One evening when we were together I asked him to do me a sketch, suggesting as a subject my old London friend, Zerbini, the viola player, who had also settled in Melbourne at the time, and who, by-the-by, often played principal viola for us in the orchestra at our Symphony Concerts. Phil May only knew him by sight, but he at once sat down, and in a few minutes presented me with a water-colour drawing done from memory, which, though a caricature, was at the same time a lifelike representation of the ruddy cheeks, white beard, loose clothing, and other noted characteristics of the musician.

There were several other interesting people I used to meet: among them, the Hon. M. H. Davies, Speaker of the Assembly, and Alfred Deakin, the

Chief Secretary, who, I believe, afterwards became Premier. They were both agreeable men, and excelled in the art of oratory, and I was very nervous when one day at an Exhibition function, seated between the two of them, I had to get up and exhibit my feeble powers in this direction.

Keeley, the musical critic of the chief Melbourne paper, reminded me very much of his London colleague, Davison, as I knew him in the old days. He (Keeley) had the same caustic pen (which, also like Davison, he could use generously when he liked), the same convivial nature, and the same partiality for sometimes taking a little more than was good for him; even his very appearance had in it a slight suggestion of the critic of the *Times*. He and a brother journalist on another important paper had once been bosom friends, but they had fallen out over some trivial matter, and had not spoken for many years, cutting each other dead whenever they met, like the two shipwrecked gentlemen on the island in Gilbert's "Bab Ballad." I am glad to say, though, that it fell to my pleasant lot to bring them together again during my stay, and to make peace between them, on which occasion they were so overjoyed (I think they had long wished to be reconciled) that they embraced and shed tears on each other's shoulders. I wish I could add, as in the fairy stories, that they lived happily ever afterwards, but this was not to be, for I heard that poor Keeley died not many months after my return to England. Besides the evening recreations above alluded to, I, of course, had my

Sundays free, and just occasionally I managed to get away on Saturday afternoon after the concert and spend the week-end at some friend's seaside residence, enjoying the rest and the sunshine. When I only had the Sunday, as was the general rule, I would either spend it quietly at home with a few friends, or go out to little informal lunches and dinners, or else make an excursion into the country to look at the wonderful fern-trees.

At one of these little luncheon parties my host was a musical enthusiast, and very facetiously inclined. Knowing that I, too, was not averse to a joke, he asked me a day or two before to help him in inventing something that might amuse his friends and relieve the usual monotony of these entertainments. So we put our heads together and concocted a musical menu, which was duly printed and placed on everyone's plate. It was intended to be comic, but I confess that it took some of the guests a long time to see the point, though it answered its purpose in the diversion it afforded, when, as each dish came round, they tried to make out what hidden resemblance it bore to the article mentioned in the musico-gastronomical programme. I give it here just as it was, leaving my readers on some long winter evening when they have nothing better to do to puzzle it out for themselves.

PROGRAMME.

1. Prelude to *Mass* ... ... *E. Doine.*
2. Air, "*Lieb'ich dir*" ... ... *Suppé.*
   (From the operetta, "The Mysteries of *Turin.*"
3. Neapolitan "*Ot-ate*" ... ... *T. Omato.*

4. Little Piece, "Ye cot to let" ... ... *P. T. Pois.*
(From the celebrated *Veau*-de-ville.)
5. "Fricka, seh! Wohl! Eil!" ... ... *Reis.*
(From "Der Laden des Fleischers."
6. English Round in B(eef) flat, "How rare are thy charms" ... ... *Bull.*
7. Drinking *Quart-et* (from "Il Dolore Finto") *Secco.*
8. Potpourri, arranged and dished up for the occasion, including the well-known items—"*Say, lad,*" "*Peace,*" "*O-live* and *be-true-to* me," etc. ... ... *Greene.*
9. Suite Anglaise (without variations) ... *Cooke.*
10. Comic Selection, "He licks 'er" ... ... *May Q. Tite.*
Monsieur Dè-plein.
11. *Full* Chorus, "To *meat* no more" ... ... *Dunn.*
12. Concerted Movement from "Der Speise Saal" by the ladies of the company ... ... *Lassen.*
(Accompanied by the great *composer,* Signor Nicotine.)

One memorable Sunday a friend hired a boat, and took a party of us to tea on the river. At the place we selected for our picnic the banks were rather high, and a plank had been put there to enable people to land easily, which most of our party did. One young lady and I were left to the last. Wishing to be very polite, I got out and gave her my hand, when just as she was in the act of stepping on to the plank, it overbalanced, and I was precipitated into the water, dragging her in with me. Now the Yarra, though very pretty at its surface, is noted for its thick black mud underneath, and in consequence, the more we tried to get out the deeper in we sank. Our friends on shore were unkind enough to laugh heartily at our mishap, but recognizing at last the serious fix (in both senses) we were in, they came to our help and pulled us out. I had attired myself in a new suit of virgin white flannels, and the young lady's dress

was (or had been) of the same colour and material, so it may be imagined what we looked like when we emerged from our quagmiry bath. Indeed, we made as ludicrous a picture in black and white (more of the former than the latter) as ever was seen at a tea party, and it would have required a Leech or a Phil May to do us justice. However, we were not going to be deprived of our afternoon's enjoyment, so we were duly scraped down and dried before the gipsy fire, and after the picnic was over, we returned to our respective dwellings none the worse for the little adventure. A touching souvenir of the occasion was presented to me afterwards by my friends in the shape of a miniature lifebelt with a suitable, if scarcely flattering, inscription on it. I may also add that I gave away my flannel suit the next day to the chimney sweep, as I considered him the only person fitted to wear it.

I had two other complete holidays. One was when the Government, in recognition of the services and hard work of the choir and orchestra, engaged a steamer and gave us a day's outing down the Bay, with an elaborate luncheon and dinner. The other was the day of the Melbourne Cup. Though never a betting man, I was very glad of the opportunity of being present at what is certainly the most popular meeting of any sort in Australia. From early morning on this great day the streets of Melbourne are almost deserted—I speak in the present tense, for I have no reason to believe that things are any different now than formerly. As I

said, the streets are practically empty, except for those unfortunate few who are compelled to go about in the fulfilment of their duties, and for the little boys who sell the papers, and who often bet among themselves on their favourite horses. Not only do the townspeople flock to the race-course, but thousands come from all parts of the colonies, anxious to be present at this great National gathering. It certainly is a fine sight. I cannot speak about the racing, for I am no judge, but as regards the immense concourse of people, the life and bustle and "fun of the fair," the pleasant little parties on the shady lawn, the comfortable arrangements of the grand stand—in fact, in all the adjuncts usual to such gatherings, it will bear favourable comparison with the Derby or any other important race-meeting in our own Northern hemisphere. This, at least, was my opinion on the one and only occasion on which I saw the Cup.

The Exhibition closed at the end of January, 1889. At the final concert there was a great demonstration. Flowers and floral tributes were showered on to the platform, the ladies of the chorus took off their scarves and waved them in the air, and then the whole choir, orchestra, and audience stood up and sang Auld Lang Syne. It was a very thrilling moment, such as comes but seldom in the ordinary musician's life, but when it does come, goes far to repay him for the many discouragements and disappointments that so constantly beset his path.

The end of the Exhibition had been reached, but

my work in Australia was not yet over. I had originally arranged to return to London to conduct the first Philharmonic Concert of the season, but I received an offer to take the orchestra to Sidney for a week's performances, which was too tempting to resist. I therefore cabled to the Philharmonic directors, and obtained their permission to be absent a little longer, promising to be back in time for the second concert. I need not say more about this other visit to Sydney than to state that the concerts, poorly attended at the outset, attracted larger and larger audiences, and in the end were as financially successful as the entrepreneurs could possibly desire.

Before leaving Melbourne I gave a farewell orchestral concert for charitable purposes, and had the pleasure of making over to the principal hospitals as the net result a sum of nearly £400. The day after this I went to Adelaide, where I conducted a performance of the "Sleeping Beauty"; from thence I took the boat back to Naples, and travelling again overland, reached London towards the end of March.

I confess that my feelings on leaving Australia were not unmingled with regret. Glad as I was to be home again, the life out there, notwithstanding the hard work, was very congenial and pleasant. The hospitality I received on all sides from the people of Melbourne was very gratifying; I had made a good many friends; and the climate even in the hottest weather suited me excellently. Above all, I had an almost barren musical field to cultivate,

and the quickly growing appreciation of the best music and the enthusiasm with which it was received were a source of great pleasure and a constant encouragement to me in the work which I had been chosen to accomplish.

The importance of our concerts was so generally acknowledged by the time the Exhibition was over that a movement was set on foot by some of the most influential citizens to continue the educational work already done by the establishment of a permanent orchestra. This they were able to do, with substantial aid from the Government, and a body was formed called the Victorian Orchestra. I was entrusted with the selection of a conductor from this country, but it was some little while before I could find a musician who was at all suitable for the post. Those who had the experience were not free to accept, and those who were free had no experience. My colleague, Hubert Parry, may possibly not remember that at the time the idea appealed very strongly to him, and that he would probably have accepted the position himself had circumstances permitted. In a letter he wrote me he said :

"Many thanks for thinking of me in connection with the Melbourne Orchestra. No one would possibly like to undertake such a thing better than I should, as I am very fond of travelling and so forth, but circumstances are too strong against me just now. . . . If I had only myself to consider I would accept with alacrity. . . . All

the same, I am much obliged, and wish I could undertake the business."

Luckily for us he did *not* accept, for the Royal College might then have lost its genial Principal, and British creative art one of its greatest ornaments.

I succeeded in the end in engaging Hamilton Clarke, who, though not much versed in the classics, was a sound musician, and had had considerable experience as a conductor of theatrical and other light forms of music. My choice—it was also Hobson's—may or may not have been a good one (I do not know), but in any case the public, I heard, did not respond to the new scheme as heartily as was anticipated, and the Victorian Orchestra had soon to be disbanded.

Since then, however, other organizations have sprung up, and if our labours of twenty-five years ago have not yet produced quite the result hoped for, signs are not wanting that the seed then sown is germinating surely, if slowly, and will some day grow into a strong, healthy tree, bearing fully ripened fruit on all its branches.

At all events, the Government did a good work, and I feel assured that even now the concerts at the Exhibition are not yet forgotten, as I myself shall never forget them.

CHAPTER XII

Ysaye's début at the Philharmonic—Leonard Borwick—Schumann's Concerto and its conductor—Anecdotes of conductors—Dvořák—Peter Benoît—Giulia Ravogli in "Orpheus"—Paderewski—His love of billiards—My rupture with the Philharmonic Society—Second visit to Vienna—"St. John's Eve"—A Norman gentleman and the Battle of Hastings—Carl Rosa's death—My cantata, "The Water Lily"—Its withdrawal from the Leeds Festival—Performance of it at Norwich—Bancroft, Conan Doyle, and Barrie at the Maloja—I again conduct the Promenade Concerts—Unsatisfactory performance of "Samson and Delilah"—Anecdote of "The Promise of Life"—Opening of the Queen's Hall—Death of Charles Hallé—My appointment as his successor.

My association with the Philharmonic Society, begun the previous year, continued pleasantly until 1892. During these seasons several artists, since become famous, made their first bow to an English audience under my bâton, besides, of course, many others already well known to the public. The Society also continued its usual plan of inviting foreign composers of eminence to come over from time to time and direct their own works. At the third concert in 1889 (the second after my return from Australia) Tschaikowsky made his reappearance and conducted his Suite in D and the Piano Concerto in B Flat, played by his clever compatriot, Sapellnikoff. The composer's visit was again only a brief one, and during the few remain-

ing years of his life I never had another opportunity of meeting him.

The following concert was made memorable by the début in England of the violinist, Ysaye, in the Beethoven Concerto. His success was immediately so great that he was engaged to play with us again a fortnight later, establishing by these two performances a reputation that has never since diminished, and that is only rivalled by his equally gifted colleague and friend, Kreisler. I say friend, because however much these two artists may compete for first place in the affections of the public, there is not the shadow of personal jealousy between them. They are fond of going to hear each other, when by chance they happen to be in the same town; and to see them together afterwards, as I have often done, and listen to their good-humoured chaff, to the comparing of their many adventures in all parts of the world, and the relation of anecdotes about their mutual artistic friends, is a very amusing experience.

In 1890 we had three well-known composers—Dvořák with his then new Fourth Symphony in G (a charming work that might with advantage be performed oftener than it is); Moszkowski, with a Suite in G Minor; and Peter Benoît, the Flemish composer, with his incidental music to "Charlotte Corday." Benoît's piece did not make much impression. As a matter of fact, gifted though he undoubtedly was, he lacked the "true spark," and for this reason the lifelong wish he cherished to be known as the originator of a Flemish school of

musical art was never more than temporarily realized. In the same season native executive talent was conspicuously represented by Leonard Borwick, who, fresh from his studies under Madame Schumann, made his first appearance, and played the Schumann Concerto with a success that roused great hopes for his future career, which hopes have since been fully justified.

It is rather a sacrilege to connect this lovely Concerto with anything of a laughable nature, but I can never listen to it without being reminded of the performances I heard under a certain conductor at one time not unknown in London musical circles. The last movement of this work was always a stumbling-block to him, particularly the syncopated second subject. This he never could get right. First he would try beating a quick three in a bar ; then, when this upset the orchestra, as it naturally did, he would try a sort of two in a bar, with a worse result. Then he would go back to three, and at last, getting hopelessly muddled, he would give it up in despair, and leave the pianist and the band to fight it out between them until they came once more into smooth water. He wore white kid gloves, much too long for him, and always pointed the forefinger of his left hand in the air while he was conducting ; and as his finger and his bâton were never together, and both of them usually beating any sort of *tempo* but the right one, the effect was like a game of see-saw, very funny to watch, but sometimes rather disastrous, as in the case of the Schumann Concerto.

Similar stories about conductors are as plentiful as flies in the middle of summer. Many of them have been told over and over again, but the following are, I think, new to most of my readers :

There was a conductor who had the habit of holding his bâton in the centre, horizontally, and diving it up and down, so that when one end pointed to the players' feet, the other was in the air, and *vice versa.* He was once rehearsing a certain piece, and could not get the band to follow him properly. After many attempts he turned to his leader and said impatiently : " Whatever is the matter with you all? Why can't you keep time?" " I don't know," said the leader, " but "—he paused, and then asked timidly—" which end of the stick are you beating with?" " With the proper end, of course," the conductor answered. " Oh," exclaimed the leader, " we have been watching the other !"

I was present one morning at a rehearsal in a provincial town, when a popular baritone was trying over one of his songs. Suddenly the horn player made a mistake. " Stop !" cried the baritone, " that ought to be A flat, not A natural. Let's begin again !" " Never you mind," replied the conductor, beating on as if nothing had happened, " you go on with your own part. *I* don't stop the band when *you* sing a wrong note !"

To go back to the Philharmonic. The list of executants who appeared during these four seasons included Joachim, Pachmann, Sophie Menter, Janotha, Stavenhagen (whose performance I remember well from the fact that it was the only

time I ever heard in public Beethoven's rather unjustly neglected Concerto in B flat); Teresina Tua and Wietrowetz, both charming violinists; Hugo Becker and his juvenile brother-'cellist, Jean Gerardy. On the vocal side we had, among others, Lilian Nordica, Margaret Macintyre, Eugene Oudin, and the sisters Sophia and Giulia Ravogli. Giulia was a curious example of a one-part artist. Her impersonation of the title rôle in Gluck's "Orpheus" was both vocally and histrionically a most artistic and touching performance, and created quite a sensation at Covent Garden at the time; but in the other parts she essayed she was, if not absolutely mediocre, at all events far below the height she reached in this one particular opera.

Last, but by no means least, we had Paderewski, who made, if I mistake not, his first appearance with orchestra at the third concert in April, 1891, having just recently taken London by storm with his own piano recitals. The years pass so quickly I can hardly believe that it is more than two decades since he first commenced to fascinate the world of music with his great executive talent and unique personality. It seems but the other day when, after a performance, we would sometimes go and have a game of billiards together, or else occasionally he would come to my house, and leave behind him not only lasting memories of his wonderful piano-playing, but more expensive ones in the form of jarred strings and broken hammers. The latter, I must hasten to say, was through no fault of his own, but simply because he was not accustomed to

the touch and mechanism of a small Broadwood Grand. I really think that next to his art, keeping late hours and playing billiards were his favourite occupations—and probably are so still. I recollect one evening, in a provincial hotel, when, the concert being over, several of us adjourned to the billiard room, to find it on the point of being closed. This would not do for Paderewski, who wanted his game, so we induced the manager, at the risk of losing his licence, to allow us to play *sub rosa*. The shutters were shut so that Bobby should not notice anything if he happened to pass, the door was locked, and we began our game, and played on until close upon five o'clock in the morning. The poor marker was nearly dropping with fatigue, but about midway through the night we subscribed a sovereign between us and presented it to him, and this effectually served to keep him awake until we had finished.

The final concert of the Philharmonic season in June, 1892, was also my last for some years to come, owing to a rupture that took place between the directors and myself. As the breach has long since been repaired, there is no reason why I should not relate the circumstances, especially as they were due in greater part to my own indiscretion. I had been chafing for some while over certain little matters, such as the amount of time taken up by the foreign composers in rehearsing their works, to the detriment of the rest of the programme; the leave of absence from rehearsal given to members of the orchestra without my knowledge or

sanction; and other occurrences. These were, perhaps, trifling in themselves, but coming not infrequently as they did, they assumed considerable importance in my eyes, and worried me a good deal. The climax came when, having but one rehearsal for the concert above mentioned, I found the time insufficient for what I considered an adequate preparation of the music. This thought was still in my mind when the hour of the concert arrived, and wishing to justify myself with the audience, I turned round to them before beginning the symphony (it was the Pastoral) and asked them to excuse any shortcomings there might be in the rendering of the work, as the rehearsal had not been as thorough as I could have desired. It was a thoughtless and unwise thing to do, as events proved, but one's impetuosity often gets the better of one's judgment, and this was so in my case. The directors took umbrage at my action, and, perhaps, not quite without reason, although from what I afterwards heard, their grievance was not so much against what I had said as against the fact of my having made a speech at all, an act which they contended was their own prerogative and no one else's. They said nothing to me at the moment about the matter, but a few weeks later I received an official letter from them, giving me my *congé*, and it was some years before my name again appeared in any of their programmes.

In the summer of this year (1892) I paid another visit to Vienna to conduct a concert of my own works at the Musical Exhibition, then being held in

that city, and on my way home I spent a few days in that delightful district, the Salzkammergut, going to Ischl, and the beautiful little Königs-see, climbing the Schafberg, and visiting Salzburg, a town that on account of all its many associations with Mozart, I had always longed to see.

The year in Australia had, of course, meant to me a complete cessation from composition of any sort; but almost as soon as I came home I began writing again diligently, my mind happy in the return to this form of work, and my ideas, perhaps, none the worse for having lain fallow so long. In truth, I felt very fresh after the sea voyage, and ready to undertake the most elaborate score that ever composer penned. I had, however, to neglect this splendid opportunity, for it happened that I was asked by Messrs. Novello to write a cantata for them to a libretto by Joseph Bennett, so I set to work on this as soon as the words were available. It was finished in September of this year (1889) and produced at the Crystal Palace during the winter. The subject, quite a pretty one, was founded on the legends and customs connected with St. John's Eve, and I endeavoured to make the music in keeping with its idyllic character. By-the-by, when the cantata was first brought out, many people imagined from the title that it was a sacred work, and had to do with some hitherto unknown event in the life of the Baptist. They seemed quite surprised when they found out that there was an evening in summer dedicated to the saint which used to be devoted in rural districts to

quaint superstitions and ceremonies of anything but a religious character. It is curious how ignorant even some of the best educated people are on little matters like this. I recollect that once when I was on a tour in Normandy, I came across a man who appeared to be well read and intelligent; at all events, from what I gathered, he held some prominent position in the little town where I met him. In the course of conversation I happened to say to him: "How strange it is to us English, when we visit these parts, to think that you should have come over and taken our country from us." "I don't understand," he replied. "Well," I said, "it's a long time ago, but, of course, I mean that little quarrel between your Duke William and our King Harold." "I never heard of it," he answered. I felt inclined to ask him, like Mark Twain: "My dear sir, have you ever heard of Adam?" However, he seemed very interested in the matter, so I had to tell him the history of William the Conqueror and the Battle of Hastings as nearly as I could remember it. Not having been present on the occasion, my description was probably a little foggy. He thanked me very much, and said he would tell his friends all about it; then we parted.

"St. John's Eve," like my much earlier cantata, "The Rose Maiden," if more mature, had no pretensions to be anything else than a simple, melodious little work; and also, like this youthful effort of mine, it soon became, and still remains, I believe, a popular item in the repertory of our choral societies. I have often thought since of adapting

it for the lyric stage, for which, in its own simple way, it seems to me very suitable ; and, indeed, there was an idea at one time of the work being given in this form, but it was never carried out.

In the same year I received a commission from Carl Rosa to compose an opera for his next London season, and the cantata once off my hands, I started on this more important work ("Thorgrim"), and devoted the entire winter and following spring to its composition. The impresario's unfortunate death at this moment, and the consequent upsetting of the organization he had so successfully established, caused me to fear that my labours would be in vain ; but Augustus Harris generously took it upon himself to carry out all the arrangements already made for the season, including the new works Rosa had commissioned, and my opera was duly produced. Of this, and my earlier and later operas, I am going to speak in a separate chapter, therefore there is no need to say more at present, but will leave all incidents connected with these works to be related in their proper time and place.

The rest of 1890, except for my Philharmonic duties, was taken up with smaller compositions, including many songs, and an In Memoriam Ode to Carl Rosa for triple quartet, chorus, and orchestra, which was performed by the Opera Company at a memorial concert given by them at Liverpool in the month of November. This is the only work of mine I have never heard, as I was unable to be present on the sad occasion for which it was written ; from what I was told, though, it came

out well and impressively at performance, and the combination of the twelve solo voices was very effective.

The next two years were very busy ones. First of all came my third opera, "Signa," which kept me occupied, with occasional intermissions, from April, 1891, until January of the next year, and with whose birth, as will be related later, Fate played many unkind tricks before it was eventually brought into the world.

Following on this came another cantata, "The Water Lily," and the list of works was completed by some albums of songs and other fugitive pieces. "The Water Lily" was originally composed for the Leeds Festival of 1892, but an unfortunate circumstance occurred that caused its ultimate withdrawal from the programme.

When the cantata was finished, I asked the festival authorities to let me know who were the artists they suggested for the principal parts. On receiving the names of these, I found that two of them would be quite unsuitable for my music, the one possessing a light soprano voice where I wanted a dramatic singer, and the other being a high baritone, whereas the part was written for a bass. I wrote explaining this, and begged the committee to reconsider the matter, to which they replied that they did not see their way to make the desired changes, and that they were of the opinion that the artists they had selected would be quite adequate to sing the work. As I knew my own music and they had never heard a note of it, I

thought this rather peremptory on their part. The upshot of it all was that, being unable to persuade them into altering their decision, and fearing to jeopardize in this way any chance of success I might have, I took the only other course open to me and withdrew the work. In compensation for this temporary disappointment (for it *was* a disappointment) the cantata was offered to Norwich, and being accepted, was performed at the festival there in October, 1893, with a cast that was in every way suited to the music—namely, Mme. Albani and Marian Mackenzie, Edward Lloyd and Norman Salmond.

I recollect that at this same festival there was given another new work written by a composer who, though not of high standing, had achieved a certain amount of popularity among smaller choral societies. The committee, being doubtful about the novelty, and having visions of probable empty seats, had engaged Paderewski to play on the same evening, and the consequence was that the hall was packed to overflowing. On the day of the concert the delighted composer, who had seen the plan of the bookings, went about, elated with pride, telling everyone he met that there was not a seat to be had anywhere for the performance of his cantata! Of course, no one undeceived him, and he was allowed to remain in innocent enjoyment of his supposed wonderful powers of attraction.

Previous to the production of "The Water Lily" I was invited to stay a few days with Signor Corti, the impresario of the theatre in Genoa, at his villa

on the Lake of Como, to complete the arrangements we had entered into for the performance of my opera, "Signa," in that town. On my way there, feeling the need of a little rest, I spent two or three weeks at Maloja in the Engadine. There was quite an interesting assemblage of noted people at the hotel, amongst whom were several of my own friends. Music was represented by our charming pianist Fanny Davies; literature by Conan Doyle and J. M. Barrie; science by Ray Lankester; and the stage by the Hares, the Bancrofts, and others. We were a merry party, going for picnics, climbing the glaciers, getting up impromptu cricket matches and dances, and otherwise enjoying ourselves thoroughly. It was there that I first tried to ride a bicycle—with the usual unpleasant and undignified results. Bancroft, also a novice, was pluckier than I was, and rode his bicycle into the lake—at least, to be exact, when he came to the edge he prudently got (?) off, and let the machine finish the excursion by itself. N.B.—His further taste for bicycling was confined to watching other people.

After a lapse of thirteen years I was once more engaged as conductor of the Promenade Concerts at Covent Garden in the autumn of 1893, the last, I think, that were held in that building. We had a goodly array of artists as before, and the taste of the public having greatly progressed during this long interval, we had no need to resort to Humorous Nights or anything of this sort in order to secure crowded audiences. An innovation we attempted

during this season was the introduction into the programmes of a few choral nights ; these, however, were not artistically very successful, the choir being very weak in proportion to the large orchestra, and placed at too far a distance to obtain a good ensemble. One work, since become very popular in this country, we were the means of bringing to the notice of an English audience, and that was Saint-Saëns' opera "Samson and Delilah." To say that the public had a fair opportunity of judging of its many beauties would not be adhering strictly to the truth ; one may go even farther, and say that the performance, for a supposed reputable body of musicians, was about as bad as it could be. I was induced to undertake the production much against my wish, knowing well how impossible it would be to do the work justice with a hurried preparation at the very end of the season, and all the other disadvantages of *locale* already alluded to. The management, however, thought differently. They engaged artists from Paris for the chief parts, invited Saint-Saëns to come over and superintend the final rehearsals, and altogether endeavoured to make of the occasion a remarkable musical event—and so it was, only not quite in the way they intended. The choir, after the deplorable manner that prevails in our country, had no chance of rehearsing with the orchestra, and the latter, excellent in itself, had little chance of rehearsing at all—at least, certainly not half enough. After taking part in one rehearsal, the French singers discovered hitherto unsuspected colds in their

heads, and decided in a hurry that it might ruin their voices for ever if they remained any longer in our climate; and Saint-Saëns suddenly remembered that he had an important engagement in Paris that obliged him to return there at once. So, with these transparent excuses, they all departed, and as the performance was fixed to take place the next evening, and could not be postponed (unless, indeed, it was given up altogether) we had to fall back upon two young English singers for the principal parts, who tried their best to learn the music in twenty-four hours, but, naturally, with very indifferent success. It was a depressing affair. But the audience stood it bravely, and even applauded at the end in a damp, flabby way, that suggested a polite expression of boredom. All the same, though I am not as a rule given to boasting, whenever anyone asks me who conducted the first London performance of Saint-Saëns' opera, I always say with pride, "I did"—but I take care to suppress all details. In one respect the occasion was not without its advantages to me, for I was able to obtain from the composer himself at rehearsal all his own *tempi* and nuances, and other hints as to the rendering, all of which have stood me in good stead at the many concert performances of the work I have since conducted.

A song of mine, "The Promise of Life," was brought out by the contralto, Belle Cole, during this season of the Promenades. Its history may perhaps be of some slight interest, as showing how difficult it is to judge beforehand what is likely or

not to take the fancy of the public. The song was composed under agreement for a firm of publishers, and duly sent to them. After a few days they wrote to me saying that they were disappointed with the song, that it was not as melodious as they had hoped, that the refrain was not taking enough, and that the accompaniment was too difficult, etc., and asked me if I would not revise it so as to make it more saleable. I replied that in my opinion, for that class of composition, it was as good as anything I had written, and that any attempt at revision would only spoil it. But, I added, if they were not satisfied, I had no desire to bind them to their contract, and would be quite willing to take back the song on condition that they would give me the rights of the lyric to which it was set. Much to my surprise, they agreed to this without demur. I at once took the song to Messrs. Boosey, who published it, and before many weeks had passed it was successfully launched on a career of popularity that has resulted up to now in a sale of over a quarter of a million copies.

An event of much importance in London musical life occurred during this year. For a long time past the want of a new concert room had been seriously felt, the accommodation at the then existing St. James's Hall, both in the auditorium and on the platform, being too limited for the rapidly increasing taste of the public for orchestral and choral concerts on a large scale. Several times rumours got abroad that such a hall was about to be built, but they all died out again. At length,

after these oft-repeated cries of "Wolf," the wolf really came—a very welcome one in this instance. Through the private enterprise of a wealthy gentleman, a site was found, the funds provided out of his own pocket, and the erection of the new Queen's Hall begun in real earnest. How I came to be associated with it was in the following way: The hall was nearing its completion at the time of the Promenades, and Messrs. Farley Sinkins and Robert Newman, the *entrepreneurs* of these concerts, applied for the position of managers as soon as the building should be ready for public use. This they obtained, and I remember that the agreement was signed in my own little room at Covent Garden Theatre over a bottle of champagne. A week or two afterwards Farley Sinkins withdrew from the partnership, and Newman was left as sole manager. As we had worked together for so many weeks in our respective capacities, it was only in the nature of things that when the time arrived, any musical performances he wished to give in the new hall should be placed in my hands; and thus it was that I became its first conductor. The inauguration took place during the ensuing winter (I think in December), when we gave a grand concert, consisting of Mendelssohn's "Hymn of Praise" and a miscellaneous second half, in which Albani, Lloyd, and other popular artists took part. In the beginning, much as the necessity for the new hall had been felt, the public was slow to patronize it.

We formed a choir and gave a series of good

choral concerts, but the lack of public support caused them soon to be abandoned. The choral concerts might, it is true, have been continued and a permanent orchestra established, as it was later, had I been able to assume a certain share of the responsibility ; but my limited means did not justify me in incurring such a pecuniary risk. So the music hall being for the moment without any music to speak of, and the conductor having nothing to conduct, my position became "a mere sinecure," and soon disappeared altogether.

Further events in the history of the Hall—the institution of the Sunday Concerts (originally conducted by Randegger), the transferring of the Promenade Concerts to the new building, and the advent of Henry J. Wood, with whose name the Queen's Hall is now so closely identified—belong to such comparatively recent times that there is no need for me to enlarge upon them.

My compositions during 1894 and 1895 included, besides over thirty songs and other small works, a sacred cantata, "The Transfiguration," written for the Gloucester Festival of the latter year, the opera "Harold," and the greater part of an orchestral suite, "In Fairyland."

Towards the end of 1895 Charles Hallé died suddenly, and the concerts he had so long and so ably directed in Manchester, Liverpool, and other towns, were left without a conductor. His name had been a household word for so many years in the musical life of the North that his loss was keenly felt, and the sad event, occurring as it did in

the middle of the season, the various societies were totally unprepared to appoint a successor, even had they thought it becoming on their part to do so in such unseemly haste. They therefore adopted the plan, now so much the fashion, of seeking the services of different guest conductors for the remainder of the season, and I was invited, among others, to undertake some of the concerts, the issue of this being that I was in the end selected to fill the vacant post.

Having now arrived at the period when my fourth and last opera was completed (I doubt if I shall ever write another), I will follow out the intention already expressed, and devote the next chapter to this and my other operatic works; not because they are important in themselves, but because the incidents and recollections connected with them seem to me to link together more easily in this way than if I had dealt with them separately at the moment of their production.

CHAPTER XIII

My first opera "Pauline"—Santley as Claude—"Thorgrim" produced at Drury Lane Theatre—D'Oyly Carte's National Theatre—Sullivan's "Ivanhoe"—Failure of the scheme—Misadventures of my opera "Signa"—Second visit to Milan—My acquaintance with Italian composers—Boito's fondness for Bach—Production of Verdi's "Falstaff" at the Scala—Melba's début there—Italian audiences—Revision of "Signa"—Its performance at the Dal Verme—Sonzogno's grievances and sudden withdrawal of the opera—Threatened duel between him and Boito—Performance of "Signa" at Covent Garden—Recital before Queen Victoria—Production of my fourth opera, "Harold"—Augustus Harris—Indifference of the public towards English opera—Dearth of librettists—Native composers and their many disadvantages.

The British composer who writes an opera under present conditions is doomed beforehand to failure.

This is a very pessimistic statement, but my reasons for making it will appear in due course. For the nonce the remark is not unfitted to serve as a short preface to all I am about to relate in this chapter. I must now put back the clock of time to the year 1873, when I paid my first visit to Milan. This visit, as may perhaps be remembered, was with the ostensible purpose of obtaining an Italian libretto for an opera on the subject of Bulwer Lytton's "Lady of Lyons."

The idea of setting this play in operatic form had evidently appealed to me for a long time, as I

have among my letters one from the distinguished author, dated as far back as 1869, which is couched in the following words :

"Dear Sir,

"In reply to your letter, nothing can induce me to consent to your turning the "Lady of Lyons" into an opera.

"Yours faithfully,

"Lytton."

Whether this refusal was a severe disappointment or not I do not remember, but certain it is that I was only temporarily discouraged, for after his death and just before I went to Italy, I returned to the project, and obtaining this time the long-deferred permission from his son, then Ambassador in Paris, I started to carry out the desire that had lain dormant but unforgotten in my mind.

The composer proposes, but the librettist disposes. I was recommended to an Italian poet who, I was told, was just the man to undertake the work. Well, he certainly did undertake it ; he even played his part of undertaker so well that he effectually buried it for me—at least, so far as any Italian setting was concerned. In short, the libretto, when I got it, was absolutely useless : the plot was badly put together, turned into a sort of comedy-opera, and the language bore about the same resemblance to poetry that Dr. Watts does to Shakespeare. Of course, I had to take it and

pay him the amount stipulated for (fortunately, not an exorbitant one), but to all intents and purposes I returned home as libretto-less as I went.

For three years I put the matter at the back of my thoughts, and it might have remained there for ever had not Carl Rosa approached me with an offer to write an opera for him. I at once bethought me of my favourite subject, of which he quite approved, and the result was the composition of "Pauline" in the year 1876.

My cantata, "The Corsair," for Birmingham had taken up the larger portion of this year, and, indeed, I did not set to work on the opera until the month of September; but so keen was I, and so anxious to see my greatest hopes at last realized, that it was all completed and ready for production within the space of two months. This meant incessant work, night and day, even allowing for the fact that the opera was on the old English lines with separate numbers and spoken dialogue in between. All the same, I do not think, on looking once more through its pages, that it showed any particular signs of being written in haste, though the music here and there might perhaps have been more carefully thought out and elaborated. "Pauline" was produced at the Lyceum Theatre at the end of November, but it did not meet with the success I had so ardently hoped for, and after a few performances in London, and later in some of the provincial towns, it ceased to hold a place in the company's repertoire. This was through no fault of Rosa's. The work had been carefully prepared

and rehearsed (he conducted it for me himself); the *mise en scène*, orchestra, and chorus were as good as one could wish for; and the cast included some of the best singers in his company. Julia Gaylord sang the part of Pauline. She was a soprano with a very sympathetic if not powerful voice, and a good actress, and, moreover, possessed the most beautiful golden hair I have ever seen, reaching literally down to the ground. I was sorry there was no mad scene in which she could let it down—it would have made the fortune of the opera. Josephine Yorke, an excellent contralto, played the Widow, and Santley was Claude Melnotte. The latter had expressed a strong wish to sing the part, so, contrary to usage, it was written for baritone instead of tenor. I remember he was so nervous on the first night before the curtain drew up that he trembled all over, and could not sit still for a moment; but when it came to it, he sang the music beautifully, and with all his renowned fervour and enthusiasm.

Nevertheless, it was a mistake. The public, for some inexplicable reason, never seems able to associate an operatic baritone with the part of hero or romantic lover, and in all the instances I know where this has been tried, the result has been eventual, if not immediate, failure. I cannot help thinking that "Pauline" suffered not a little from the same cause. Another reason that militated against its success was the weakness of the libretto. This was certainly superior to the Italian one of three years back (it could scarcely have been other-

wise) inasmuch as there were several good dramatic scenes, and the plot remained, as nearly as operatic exigencies would permit, in accordance with Bulwer Lytton's play. But the librettist, Henry Hersee, had attempted a very risky thing, and had mixed up a good deal of the author's poetical, if sometimes stilted, language with his own rather commonplace verses. To quote an amusing criticism from one of the leading London papers :

"Mr. Hersee, with superfluous precaution, hides himself as much as possible under Lord Lytton's theatrical cloak ; even to the extent of taking 'less than a fourth' of his book from the play. The result is a curiously laminated structure resembling those products of the confectioner's art from which Masters Sandford and Merton receive a lesson in geological strata while impairing their digestion. Now, Lytton flashes upon us with a splendour equal, at least, to that of Dutch metal ; above him rests the more solid and less pretentious mass of Hersee, in turn surmounted by a layer of Lytton, and so on, till the apex—all Hersee—is attained."

This, if a little satirical and unkind, was not very far from the truth ; in any case, the mixture of the two styles was in many places very incongruous, and it would probably have been better if the librettist had kept entirely to his own poetry, however feeble, and left Bulwer Lytton's alone. I will not say that the music had not also its defects, but, at least, it was spontaneous and melodious, and I still think that had the chief part not been written for baritone, and the opera cast in more

modern shape—that is, without dialogue—it might have had a fair chance of holding its own among the lighter operatic works of that period.

I did make an attempt some time afterwards to revise the opera, at Rosa's request, and to rewrite the part of Claude for tenor, but it was too late. Resuscitating old bones is never a thankful task; besides which, I found that it entailed such a transposition of the numbers and reconstruction of the music from beginning to end, that it would have been almost as easy to write an entirely new work in the time; therefore, after a short trial, I gave it up.

Rosa was much annoyed at this, as I had made an agreement with him for the revision, and instituted legal proceedings against me; and though the matter was compromised afterwards by my giving him the copyright of a couple of songs, it caused a break in our friendship that lasted for some years.

Thus ended my first venture in the domain of opera.

For thirteen years I remained in quiet and philosophic contemplation of my failure. Then the opportunity came for me to try my luck a second time. Rosa had commissioned Joseph Bennett to write a libretto for him, and our quarrel having been made up shortly before, he asked me if I would undertake the music. The subject was a Scandinavian one, entitled "Thorgrim," and as my symphony had in a way identified me with that part of the world, he doubtless thought I was as

suitable a composer as he could find for the purpose. Personally, I was a little in doubt as to the advisability of putting ancient Jarls and Vikings on the stage, and feared that such remote people and doings would not be of interest to the public. But Rosa himself was keen on the subject, and still keener in his desire to introduce a wonderful avalanche scene that he had invented in conjunction with the scene painters and the carpenter, and which, he said, would be the making of the opera. This, however, I strongly objected to, so he had it inserted into Corder's opera "Nordisa," where on the first night it kicked up such a dust, and otherwise so misbehaved itself that it went near to spoiling the composer's chance of success.

I was free of the avalanche, but that did not make me any the less distrustful about the plot. Knowing, though, that a stage success is often made out of unpromising materials, and being, moreover, very anxious to show myself again as an operatic composer, I smothered my doubts, hoped for the best, and set to work enthusiastically on the new opera.

This was in 1889. Before the work was half completed, Carl Rosa died. This untimely event and the taking over of the season by Augustus Harris have already been alluded to in the previous chapter.

"Thorgrim" was finished early in 1890, and performed under my own direction for the first time at Drury Lane Theatre in the April of that year. The principal artists were Zelie de Lussan, Tremelli,

Barton McGuckin, and Leslie Crotty—an admirable quartett—and the opera obtained a very gratifying reception from a crowded audience. The music, if I may be allowed to say so, was a great advance on "Pauline." This was only natural, as I had now arrived at the prime of life, and my experience in symphonic and vocal writing, if not in operatic, had considerably matured during the long interval between the two operas. The opinion generally expressed at the moment about "Thorgrim" confirmed this view, a pleasing circumstance of which, let me add, I was totally unaware until a few days ago. Being of a sensitive nature, like most musicians, and easily, if unnecessarily, worried about what the Press said (I have got over this now), I put aside the criticisms sent to me without the moral courage even to glance at them, and it was only when searching among my papers for material suitable to this chapter that these forgotten "spirits" arose once more out of the past, and I began to read them. Perhaps I may be pardoned for giving one or two excerpts from these notices. One of the chief critics says with regard to the third act:

"Throughout the third act of 'Thorgrim,' Mr. Cowen's shining gifts as an instrumental composer and writer for the orchestra are displayed to the greatest advantage. But for the graceful interpolation of a sprightly part song for female voices, most delicately and fancifully introduced by the strings, this act might pass for a movement of a romantic symphony. . . . Olaf's grand scena

and the ensuing duet are both beautiful numbers ; but their effectiveness, about which there is not the shadow of a doubt, is at least as directly attributable to the symmetrical splendour of the orchestration as to the melodic significance of the vocal parts, with the exception of the episode in E major, an outburst of passionate and dramatic tunefulness, the power and impressiveness of which have not been excelled by Verdi or Wagner even in their happiest love inspirations. . . . The success of 'Thorgrim' is an accomplished fact."

Another says, in alluding to the finale of the second act :

"Mr. Cowen has never written anything finer than this exquisite mass of harmonic colour, which, with its beautiful transitions and exciting climax, will unhesitatingly be picked out as the gem of the opera."

I need not go on with these quotations ; they already look as if I had started to compile a column of self-laudatory advertisements for the Saturday issue of a daily paper. My reason, however, for mentioning the notices at all is not one of conceit, but simply to show that the praise of the critic, the excellence of representation, and the artistic efforts of the composer, are all of no use without that indefinable *something* which attracts the public and holds it in sympathetic interest throughout a performance. In the case of "Thorgrim," this *something* was evidently lacking, for notwithstanding its apparent success at first, it only lived a short while.

The praise bestowed on my music may or may not have been entirely justified—this is not for me to say—but Bennett's inexperience as a dramatic writer was without doubt one of the primary causes for the opera's premature demise. The words of his libretto, though not so poetical as "St. John's Eve," were well written, and thoroughly fitted for setting to music, and the purely lyrical scenes were admirable ; but the subject required careful treatment to turn those legendary warlike heroes, with their fierce passions, sudden quarrels, crude love-making, and superstitious belief in Fate, into living creatures of real flesh and blood, and in this he failed. Had he possessed greater knowledge of stage requirements, he might have made, even out of this barbaric material, a human and stirring drama. Perhaps some day this may yet be done. These two works of mine, "Pauline" and "Thorgrim," if ending in disappointment, were, at all events, ushered into existence along a comparatively smooth road ; not so my next opera, whose path was strewn with sharp thorns in every direction before it found its first resting-place.

In 1890 D'Oyly Carte, the well-known manager of the Gilbert and Sullivan Operas, conceived the idea of building a National Theatre with a view to making it into a permanent home for English operatic works of a more serious description. The theatre was to be opened with a grand opera by Sullivan, to be followed by other native compositions, and I was asked by Carte to contribute a new work to the scheme. "Once bitten, twice

shy," or, rather, in this case, "twice bitten, thrice shy"; so this time I looked about me for a subject that was neither taken from a popular play nor founded on the legends of bygone ages, but that should be modern and picturesque, and at the same time contain such human feelings and passions as would be likely to awaken the sympathy and interest of the public.

My choice fell at last upon Ouida's novel "Signa," and I got Gilbert à Beckett (who had already collaborated with Stanford in one or two operas) to write the book for me. The story was briefly as follows:

"Bruno, a Tuscan peasant, is wrapped up in his nephew Signa, whom he rescued when a child and has brought up on his farm. Signa is not content with his work in the fields, but aspires to be a musician, for which career he possesses great natural gifts. Gemma and Palma, two sisters, have grown up in the village with him, and he becomes passionately attached to the former. She, however, is a flighty, restless being, very ambitious, and though returning his affection in her own coquettish way, is much more imbued with the desire to leave her native village and see something of the world. This she soon does, and eventually becomes a celebrated singer. Signa, left alone, is torn between the duty he owes his uncle and his longing to follow Gemma and pursue the art that is for ever calling to him and giving him no peace. At last Bruno, in a fit of anger at the boy's constant melancholy and unrest, snatches

up his beloved violin and smashes it to pieces on the ground. This is more than Signa can bear; he forsakes the home of his childhood, seeks out Gemma, and is soon hopelessly entangled in her meshes, even to the point of sacrificing in the end his art and ambitions on the altar of his passions. The news before long reaches Bruno's ears. His one and only thought in the world has always been for his adopted son, for whom he has toiled night and day to no purpose; and thinking now in the innocence of his heart that there is but one way to save him and bring him back to the old life, he journeys to the city where the lovers are, steals into the house in Signa's absence, and stabs Gemma to death. But in vain. Signa returns, and finding himself bereft of all he holds most dear on earth, puts an end to his own existence; and Bruno, stung by remorse, gives himself up into the hands of the executioner."

This story, as told by Ouida, was very touching, and I was much taken with it. It had, of course, to be altered in some places and much reduced, so as to bring it within the limits of four acts, but the main idea was kept, and many of the incidents remained the same as in Ouida's novel.

I worked at the opera throughout the greater part of 1891, and finished it in January of the following year. In the meanwhile the new theatre was opened, and Sullivan's "Ivanhoe" produced. I remember the first night well, the crowd of fashionable and musical people, the admiration expressed for the charming building, and the en-

thusiastic applause with which the new work was greeted. Everything augered well for the success of the scheme. Unfortunately, D'Oyly Carte had reckoned without his host. He thought that Sullivan's opera would be sufficient of itself to fill the theatre for some time, and had entered into a hard and fast agreement with the composer to run it for a large number of consecutive nights. But, fine as much of the music was, the opera's power of attraction, after the first novelty had worn off, was by no means as great as he had expected, and the engagement of a double set of artists did not improve matters, for the obvious reason that the original cast was looked upon as the best, and when the other singers appeared the public did not come.

My own opera was commissioned too late for me to complete it in time to follow Sullivan's ; therefore, after the enforced run of the latter, having no other English work ready, Carte was obliged to resort to a French light opera as a stop-gap, with but a poor result. By this time his pockets had been considerably depleted, and not being disposed to incur further risk, he abandoned his scheme and gave up the theatre, which building, much to the regret of all music-lovers, was reopened later as the Palace Music Hall.

I was thus left with my new work on my hands, and without being able to see any chance of its production. I did not care to offer it to the Carl Rosa Company, as they were not having any London season, and a provincial début was not

what I desired; so I was at my wits' end to know what to do. After turning the matter over in my mind for some little while, the idea struck me of taking the opera to Italy and trying to have it produced there. I therefore had an Italian translation made, and started in search of an impresario. This I found at last in the person of the manager of the Carlo Felice Theatre at Genoa, who for a consideration (not by any means a small one) agreed to perform the opera during the ensuing winter. Accordingly, I repaired to Genoa in the late autumn of 1892 to superintend the production. I was, however, again to suffer disillusion. I had no sooner begun the rehearsals than I found that the artists my impresario had given me were not such as would be at all likely to insure the success of my work, and that in many other respects also the performance did not promise to be anything like what I was entitled to expect for my money. I at once determined to get out of the bargain. It was a difficult thing to manage, but after a great deal of worry, and with the help of a lawyer friend, I eventually succeeded. I was glad afterwards that I had done so, for, apart from the above disadvantages, I heard from many of the Genoese themselves that their city was far from being a musical one, and was about the last place in Italy a composer would select to produce a new work.

I have disliked Genoa ever since this unfortunate business. Even at the time I never could see much to admire there, except, perhaps, the

Campo Santo, with its beautiful sculptured tombs, which, if a somewhat morbid thing to go into raptures over, certainly deserved its reputation. In connection with this cemetery an amusing incident happened. While staying at the hotel I met two English ladies one evening who were busy doing the sights of the town in as short a time as possible, in the usual manner of the "lightning" tourist. To my question as to where they had been that day they replied, "To the cemetery." The next morning I met them again going out, and asked them, "What are your plans for to-day?" They said, "We are going to Campo Santo, which everyone tells us is a thing we must not miss seeing on any account." "But, my dear ladies," I remarked, "you told me you went there yesterday." "No," they answered, "that was the cemetery." I thought it kinder to explain matters and thus save them a useless journey, but although they thanked me for telling them, I think they felt quite aggrieved at being done out of the extra "sight," which they had been looking forward to with so much pleasure.

Having shaken the dust of Genoa off my feet, I proceeded with my manuscript to Milan, where I procured an introduction to Sonzogno, the fortunate impresario of "Cavalleria Rusticana" and "Pagliacci," and asked him to look at the score with a view to its performance at his theatre. He put me off week after week with some excuse or other, but at last, pressure having been brought to bear upon him by some influential English friends, he began to consider the matter seriously, and went so

far as to promise to produce the opera in the ensuing April.

I waited patiently in Milan for a month or two, then seeing that he made no sign of fulfilling his promise, I approached him again. This time the matter was brought to a head, and he definitely decided to perform the opera during his next autumn season, on condition, however, that I would reduce it from four acts to three, as he thought it too long.

Notwithstanding all this worry and waiting, my three months' stay in Milan was, on the whole, very agreeable. I went often to the opera and to any concerts that were worth hearing, and became acquainted with all the principal composers then resident in the city—Boito, Mascagni, Puccini, Leon Cavallo, and Franchetti. The latter was an amateur musician—that is to say, he was the son of a rich banker, and quite independent of his profession; nevertheless he was thoroughly equipped in his art, both technically and artistically, if lacking in the individuality and inspiration which mark the border-line between genius and mere talent. An opera of his that I heard, "Christopher Columbus," showed all these qualities and defects; but the latter predominating, it did not meet with much approval. Mascagni was a pleasant companion, still boyish in his manner, and as far as I could see, quite unspoilt by his world-wide success.

Of Boito I saw perhaps more than any of the others, as we not only used to meet frequently at the opera and at his favourite café, but also at the

houses of mutual friends. He was a charming man, distinguished looking, quiet and refined, and with the polished manner of a thorough gentleman. As a musician his tastes were well cultured, and he possessed a sound knowledge of all the great masters. Bach's music, perhaps, appealed to him most, and the excerpts from it we used often to sing and play in the intimacy of small social circles always gave him true and unfeigned enjoyment. On the intellectual side, also, he was highly accomplished, being well read, and, it need hardly be told, more of a poet even than a composer, as the librettos to Verdi's "Otello" and "Falstaff," and his own "Mefistofele," amply prove. His second opera, "Nero," was even then supposed to be ready for production, but when one spoke to him about it his answers were as vague as they have been ever since, and the musical world is still waiting to hear it, for some hidden reason known only to himself.

I was present at the first performance of Verdi's "Falstaff" at the Scala. It was the most exciting scene I ever took part in. The house was crammed from floor to ceiling with all that was fashionable and artistic, music lovers having come from all parts of the world to hear the work, and the applause, encores, and enthusiasm, were continuous throughout the whole evening. But the most moving sight of all was when the grand old octogenarian of music came before the curtain after each act, and amid the cheering and waving of handkerchiefs, made his bow—smiling, and as erect as if he were his own young self of fifty years back,

witnessing the triumph of his "Nabuco" or "Lombardi."

I tried hard, through some of his personal friends, to obtain an introduction to him during his short stay; he was so overwhelmed, however, with callers on the same errand as myself, that, beyond his few intimates, he would see no one: therefore, after one or two visits to his hotel, I had not the courage to persist any further in my desire, and relinquished the attempt. But I would have given a great deal just to shake hands with the great composer who, more than any other, has shed a lustre on the musical art of Italy that will probably never again be equalled.

Melba also made her début in Milan while I was there. Before her arrival there was considerable prejudice and disbelief in the reports about her talent, and one musician (who was evidently ignorant of all musical matters outside of his own country) said to me: "I suppose this is another of your English singers with a voice like the whistle of a steam engine," to which I merely replied, "Wait until you hear her."

I must say that the Italians are very generous when they really like anything—as generous on such occasions as they can be rude and unforgiving when the reverse is the case.

There was a performance one night at the Scala —I think it was a ballet—which did not please the audience. It had not proceeded far before they began to protest and call out loudly to the performers to stop. No notice being taken of this, they started to "boo" and hiss until finally, fully determined in

their minds that the performance should *not* go on, a dozen or so of the malcontents walked through the stalls, climbed into the orchestra, and laying hold of the conductor and his chair, lifted them up, and overturned them on to the floor. There was no more ballet that evening. To Melba, on the contrary, the Milanese public took an immediate fancy. By the time she had finished her first cadenza in "Lucia," all prejudice had vanished; everyone was completely captivated by her wonderful vocalization, and thenceforward to the end of the opera her success was never for a moment in doubt.

As a people, though their discrimination may sometimes be faulty and carried to absurd extremes, the Italians are certainly fond of music, above all, of opera, and this fondness is not confined to the well-to-do classes, but even the tradespeople and their families take an interest in the art that is very exhilarating to a musician coming from a prosaic country like ours.

A few days before the production of my opera I went into a barber's shop to have my hair cut, and the first thing the man wanted to know, when I was seated, was if I had heard anything about the new opera by an Englishman that was going to be performed; who he was, how old he was, etc. Of course, I did not give myself away, and professed entire ignorance of the matter. Here, our Figaros would have asked what horse I had backed, or if I had been to the football match; but this man was keen on talking music, whether I had been to the

Scala to hear such and such an opera, what I thought of this or that singer, and other musical topics of the day.

I had already made Melba's acquaintance in London through her sisters, whom I knew in Melbourne, and was therefore often included in the pleasant little coterie of friends she had gathered round her in Milan.

One day she sent me an anonymous letter she had received, which ran as follows :

"As an Australian on a temporary visit to this city, I take the liberty of congratulating you on your triumphs. At the same time I think I ought to warn you that that blackguard, Fred Cowen, is not a fit companion for you. I have heard that he has been seen a good deal in your company, and I strongly advise you to give him the cold shoulder at once. His reputation, both in England, Australia, and here in Milan, is of the worst, and there is no mean action he is not capable of. I have personally no spite against him, but as a countryman, and an admirer of your great talents, I think it only right to warn you. Wishing you many more triumphs.

"Yours,

"An Australian Admirer."

This letter did not annoy me as much as she expected. I certainly felt *quite* convinced in my mind that the writer had no personal spite against me, considering that he and I were one and the

same person. I had written the letter myself as a little joke; for what reason I do not now remember, except that I was aware there were several people desirous of becoming acquainted with her whom she did not care to know, and I may have had the idea that she would take the letter as coming from one of these neglected admirers. She accepted it all in very good part when I told her afterwards; the "cold shoulder" was turned into an excellent dinner, and "that blackguard, Fred Cowen," was still permitted to retain her friendship.

Armed with Sonzogno's definite promise I came home in April, and spent the next two or three months in revising "Signa," and reducing it to three acts, in accordance with his wish. After the Norwich Festival in October I once more returned to Milan for the production of the opera. This long-awaited event took place at the Dal Verme Theatre on Sunday, November, 12, 1893—the first English opera, I believe, that had been produced in Italy for over thirty years. There was a large audience, and the work was received with every outward sign of success, if applause and countless recalls can be accepted as a criterion of this. I had stipulated for at least three performances—the usual mode of procedure in Italy with all new works. The second performance was duly given the following evening, but the third was abandoned almost at the last moment. The apparent reason was this: Sonzogno had produced another new opera the previous week, Leon Cavallo's "I Medici," and had invited the London critics to attend the

premières of both works. Unfortunately, "I Medici" did not meet with their approval, and the impresario, having seen the criticisms, was very annoyed, got the idea into his head that I was in conspiracy with the London Press to condemn the Italian opera and praise my own, and refused to give any further performances. Whether he had really ever had any intention of giving more than the two representations I cannot say, but certain it is that on the first night notices were posted up in the theatre to the effect that the entire troupe would leave Milan on the next day but one; in other words, on the day before that announced for the third performance. Looking at the matter calmly, after all these years, it still seems to me that his treatment of my work was not as fair and just as it might have been. He produced it on Sunday—a night on which such a thing as a *première* in Italy was practically unknown. Then he selected for the second performance an even worse night than this—a Monday. It is notorious to all who know anything of operatic affairs in Italy that this day used to be a *dies non*, as after Saturday and Sunday no one had any money to spend on theatres on Monday; therefore, if the audience was small on this second occasion, it was an inevitable result of the choice of a date on which it was almost the invariable rule to close all opera houses. The affair was much talked about at the time, and gave rise to a good deal of correspondence and lengthy statements in the English and Italian papers—accusatory on the one side, explanatory on the other.

Sonzogno was supposed to have said that if he ever met me again he would put a bullet through me. (It was suggested to me to wear a coat of mail under my waistcoat for protection, but I thought it a cowardly thing to do, so refrained.) Seriously, though, he did nearly put a bullet through Boito. The composer had generously taken my part throughout the affair; a quarrel ensued, and Sonzogno challeged him to a duel. They made all preparations, engaged their seconds, and started surreptitiously for Naples; but by the time they met at the appointed place, the impresario's anger had cooled down, so they shook hands and returned home as friendly as before. It was naturally very disquieting to my mind to feel that I should have been the innocent means of implicating a colleague and friend in this unfortunate business, even though the consequences were not so serious as I feared, and I wrote to Boito and told him so. He replied a few weeks later in a charming letter, of which the following is a translation:

"Here I am, if a little late, quite ready to answer your kind letter. I beg you not to worry any more, but to forget completely this untoward affair. As for myself, I have forgotten it long since, and I assure you that I bear you no malice whatever. Life passes so quickly that the happenings of a month ago seem already to belong to the past. There is no need for you to prove to me the perfect innocence of your conduct; I have never doubted it. Accept my sincerest regards.

"Arrigo Boito."

I can laugh now at all these things—Sonzogno's treatment of me, the threatened duel, and all the other incidents of this "storm in a teacup"; but at the time it was no laughing matter, and it gave me many sleepless nights.

I had another chance with "Signa" the next year. Augustus Harris, who came to Milan on purpose to hear it, offered to perform it at Covent Garden Theatre, suggesting, though, that it should be further reduced to two acts, in order to make the work, as he called it, hang together better. A drowning man catches at *any* straw. I caught at this one, and immediately proceeded once more to mutilate my poor opera. It was brought out in London in its new form during the summer of 1894. As though I had not already had disappointment enough, Melba, who had promised to sing for me in the work, was attacked with a nervous illness and forbidden to exert herself more than was absolutely necessary, and the part of the heroine was given to a soprano of the name of Nuovina, who, though a capable artist, was neither in appearance nor voice an ideal representative of the character. Ben Davies and Ancona, who sang the parts of Signa and Bruno, were, however, both excellent. The reduction of the opera to two acts did not improve it. It was like taking away someone's body, and then trying to join the head and legs together—it was impossible not to notice that something was missing. In fact, the whole thing was so curtailed, so concentrated, that nearly all the essence was squeezed out of it. The plot moved so

fast that the motives of the characters, like the milestones in the American's story, became a stone wall impossible to see through; and the music, instead of hanging together as Harris expected, betrayed, at least to my own ears, strong symptoms of the disease known as "paste and scissors."

After the first night I asked Harris to approach Queen Victoria with a view to a command performance of the opera at Windsor. Her Majesty had already graciously accepted its dedication, and knowing that she had often visited Signa (the little town from which my hero took his name) during her sojourns in Florence, I thought she might perhaps be sufficiently interested to accord the work a hearing. Harris did not enter into my suggestion with any enthusiasm; in fact, he pooh-poohed the idea; so I took my courage in both hands and wrote myself to the Queen. It may be that this unusual way of approaching Her Majesty without Court influence amused her, or she may really have been in sympathy with the subject; at all events, she was good enough to accede to my request, and fixed the date, informing me at the same time that she only desired a recital of the music without stage accessories. When I went to Harris and told him what I had done, he seemed very surprised, and said, "My dear boy, how did you manage it?" I answered, "Never mind, that's my business. Let me have the artists."

We went to Windsor, and sang nearly the whole of the opera before the Queen and a large number

of invited guests. Her Majesty was in one of her most gracious moods, and talked to me for some time, not only about my music, which she said pleased her very much, but also about her favourite city, Florence, its treasures and its beautiful surroundings, with which I, too, was fortunately well acquainted. It was the only time I ever had the honour of meeting Queen Victoria.

This Royal performance did not, however, have any effect in making the opera a success, and it was only given twice. My music was again not entirely to blame for this; but, as I have said, the libretto had been so cut about that the original picturesqueness of the story was gone, and there was little left to rouse the interest of the opera-going public.

The fable of the man and his donkey was never more applicable than in the case of "Signa." I had striven to please everyone, and in the end had succeeded in pleasing no one, not even myself. I much regretted that I had not left the work in its original state, or even as a three-act opera, for at least in this latter shape it gave indications of proving an eventual success, if only Sonzogno had helped it through the early stage of its career.

My disappointment at this third failure was not so great as it might have been, for I was consoled in advance by the composition of another opera that Harris had commissioned me to write, and on which I was already at work. The subject was "Harold," and the libretto was by Sir Edward Malet, our Ambassador at Berlin. With this work I hoped to retrieve my operatic misfortunes.

The old historic plot pleased me ; it was heroic, and at the same time human in its interest : moreover, it was purely English, and was to be performed in that language. So it seemed to me that I had now found something on which I could exercise the best powers that were in me, and with every chance of at last being successful. The drama, as Sir Edward Malet had written it, would have taken a week to perform, and much of its blank verse was unsuitable for music, but with the aid of another *collaborateur*, F. E. Weatherley, we revised it, reduced it within reasonable limits, and put it into the requisite shape for operatic treatment without materially altering the dramatic nature of its chief scenes. I will not say that even in its revised form it was an absolutely first-rate libretto, but it was at least up to, if not beyond, the average of English works of this description, and far superior to any of those I had already set to music. Indeed, some of the scenes were very effective, notably, the whole of the first act, the swearing of Harold's oath in Bayeux Cathedral, and the finding of his dead body by Edith. I worked hopefully and diligently at "Harold" for nearly a twelvemonth, and took each scene, as I finished it, to show to Harris. He did not know very much about music, but he had a natural instinct for dramatic effect, and was quick at finding out the weak spots, and making suggestions which were often to the advantage of the work. Sometimes, though, he got a little out of his element. For instance, he would say to me during

the stage rehearsals, "Look hear, my dear fellow, this is too long, it spoils the action; you must cut it." "I don't see how I can," I would reply. "Oh, yes, it is quite easy," he would continue, putting his finger on some place in the score, "cut out these twenty bars." "Cutting out these twenty bars" meant perhaps leaving off in the key of E flat, and beginning again in D. A man may have false relations in his domestic surroundings, and still not recognize them when they appear on music paper; but nothing of this sort mattered much to him as long as some particular stage entry or procession was not kept waiting. He certainly knew what he wanted, even if he did not know the connection of one key with another, and, although at the rehearsals of "Harold" he was continually being called away on other and equally important business matters, he managed to bestow as much care and attention to detail on its preparation as he did on everything else he undertook. He had a restless way of doing things—but he got them done—how, I never could understand. I used sometimes to go to his home early in the morning, and would find half a dozen other people already waiting for him. Some of these he would see in his dressing-room, then when he came downstairs he would interview the rest (and any more that had arrived in the interim) while swallowing down his breakfast. The procedure was something after this fashion:

To the costumier: "What about those new dresses for 'Carmen'?" A little talk on the

subject while he ate a mouthful of fish. To Cecil Raleigh (between two gulps of coffee): "Have you brought the scenario for the Drury Lane drama?" Another little talk. To the scene-painter (putting his spoon in an egg): "I don't like this model for the last scene. You must leave a place in the centre for Harold's body, so that the light may shine on it." Talk number three. Then after this unsatisfactory sort of breakfast he would go down to Covent Garden; then he would have a fencing lesson for exercise; after which he would don his sheriff's uniform, and go to the Mansion House; then back to the opera, and so on and so forth, until midnight or later. It was a wearing life, and no wonder it killed him prematurely.

Well, "Harold" was produced at Covent Garden in the summer of 1895. The artists were as good as I could possibly wish for, including as they did Albani, Brozel, and David Bispham; the orchestra, scenery, and costumes, were excellent; the music was certainly the strongest I had yet written in this department of my art; and the libretto, if a little sombre in one or two of the scenes, was, as I have said, for the most part quite effective.

The theatre was full, and the Prince and Princess of Wales (King Edward and Queen Alexandra) honoured the performance with their presence. In fact, nothing that it was possible to do was wanting to make the work a success. But, alas! Fate was still against me, and my fourth opera went the way of the other three. The reason this time was, I

think, a very different one. The Covent Garden audience was always delighted to listen to opera in Italian, French, or German, or sometimes all three mixed up together ; but an English opera sung in English was to them an unprecedented and unwarrantable thing. That sort of work was all very well in the autumn or spring at reduced prices, but during the grand opera season ? No, it could not be tolerated, and must be treated with the contempt it deserved !

I am not saying this without good authority. Harris told me after the first performance that he had received a letter from one of his influential lady patrons to the effect that she and her friends did not go to Covent Garden to hear English opera, and that if he intended to continue that sort of thing, they would have to give up subscribing. "I am afraid this is the general opinion," he said to me ; "I am very sorry, but I cannot go on, or I may get myself into trouble." So, after one more representation already announced, "Harold" had to be withdrawn.

The history of my operas is now ended. Of the four I composed I certainly consider that "Thorgrim" and "Harold" were the best, the latter especially ; but all of them might have succeeded better had they not been the victims of adverse circumstances, or not suffered from the many disadvantages that surround the path of the British operatic composer on every side.

And this brings me back to the opening sentence of this chapter. As long as present conditions

prevail in this country, so long will native opera be severely handicapped. The chief fault lies in the lack of good librettists. One cannot make bricks without straw, and if the literary straw is nothing but limp and unripe stalks, the musical bricks will not cohere, but will crumble to pieces. In other words, the best music that ever was written has no chance if the libretto is badly put together and uninteresting, and one could cite many examples of fine operas (from a musical point of view) that have failed on this account. On the other hand, it is quite within the range of possibility that a really strong book might carry an opera through, even though the music were of an inferior character. The men who have hitherto written our librettos—I am speaking, of course, of serious opera—have always been wanting in some, at least, of the qualities essential to this kind of work. Our poets know little or nothing about the stage ; our dramatists are seldom writers of good poetry, or even if they are, they are not disposed to waste the time that might be more profitably employed in their own sphere ; those who may perhaps combine in themselves both the poet and the dramatist do not understand the other important requirements of opera. Therefore, we are obliged to content ourselves with the ordinary *littérateur* of more or less inexperience, who may or may not possess one or two of these qualities (it is a matter of chance), but never all, and who, for this reason, is rarely if ever able to imbue even the most promising subject with that animation and

interest which, in opera, transform the characters from mere puppets into live human creatures.

Libretto-writing is an art of itself, requiring not alone the poetic, dramatic, or musical instinct, but a combination of all three, as well as a knowledge of other special attributes that belong exclusively to the operatic stage. This art has never been properly cultivated in England, for the reason perhaps that the opportunity for pecuniary reward, contrary to the custom of other countries, has always been of the slightest. The primary cause, however, is of the librettist's own making, as up to now his efforts have seldom entitled him to be placed on the same footing with the composer.

And this is not the only disadvantage native composers of opera labour under. There is another important obstacle in their way, and that is the apathy of the public towards the works themselves.

There is no doubt that the disbelief in the possibility of a British musician to rival his foreign compeers in writing for the stage (a disbelief that is still not entirely confined to this branch of music) causes the public to assume an attitude towards native opera that is far from encouraging. They may listen to a new production of this class with curiosity and tolerance ; they may even applaud it at the outset ; but the preconceived prejudice is there all the time, and usually makes itself felt after one or two performances.

The constant weakness of the librettos (which in some cases may possibly react on the composer's

music) has, no doubt, something to do with this, but certainly not everything. English opera—not only native works, but *all* opera in the English language—is looked down upon as an inferior article, very praiseworthy in its proper place, but not entitled to rank for a moment with performances in other languages. Consequently our composers have to accept the situation as they find it, avail themselves of the only opportunities afforded them, and place their works before a public tribunal of prejudice and comparative indifference. This state of things is naturally very detrimental to the aspirant to operatic honours, and discounts to a large extent any chances he may have of success.

British patriotism plays a very significant part in our politics, our institutions, our sports, even in our literature and painting; but in music, speaking generally, it is conspicuous by its absence, and nowhere more conspicuous than in the realm of serious operatic works.

What we require in order to place English opera on its proper level is, firstly, a genuine poet who is willing to write, and capable of writing, good librettos; secondly, a condition that may enable a manager to adequately reward the librettist for his services; and lastly, a public whose patronage is not grudgingly bestowed, but whose national pride may induce it to look upon English opera and English operatic works with the same unbiassed feelings and in the same light in which it is accustomed to regard the works of other nationalities. There is

no reason why our composers should not be able to hold their own on the stage (orchestral and choral music are not the only branches in which they have already proved their capabilities); but until other and more favourable circumstances prevail, such as I have mentioned, they will remain with an irksome chain around their limbs that will, I am afraid, continue to lead them to failure.

These words are not written on my own behalf, nor as an apology for the non-success of my stage efforts—my music may have deserved its fate, or it may not, and in any case I fancy I have done with writing opera now—but I have been impelled to make these remarks by the recollection of my own disappointments, and in the hope that the time will come before long when English operatic art will not only be recognized as worthy of attention, but will, through the ideal combination of librettist and composer, deserve and command it.

CHAPTER XIV

Liverpool and Manchester concerts — Choir's objection to "Phaudrig Crohoore" — "Batley's" band — Moszkowski's joke about Carreño—Sarasate's mascotte—Forgetting his own music—First performance of Berlioz's "The Trojans" at Liverpool—Constitution of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society—My appointment as conductor of two societies in Bradford—Offer of conductorship at Buxton—My re-election to the London Philharmonic—"Ode to the Passions" at Leeds—Sympathy with my unjust treatment in Manchester—Termination of my appointment there—Song recital—Scarborough Festivals—A young lady's sudden gift of piano-playing—My Concertstück performed by Paderewski—The Queen of Roumania.

Having been weighed in the balance at Liverpool and Manchester and not found wanting, I was appointed to fill the place left vacant by Hallé's death, and took up the permanent conductorship of the concerts in these cities in the spring of 1896. Besides the Liverpool Philharmonic and the Hallé Concerts, I had also, by virtue of my office, to conduct all those others in Bradford, Leeds, etc., in which Hallé and his orchestra had for years been in the habit of taking part. This meant an average of three concerts a week with rehearsals, and gave me plenty to do. In fact it was the real commencement of a long period in my life (leaving aside the time of the Melbourne Exhibition) in which my duties as a conductor were ever on the

increase, eventually to become my chief occupation, to the enforced neglect of my composition during the greater portion of each year.

When I first took over the Manchester Concerts the celebrated Hallé orchestra had grown a little slack, not so much in its playing, but in its somewhat listless and casual demeanour at rehearsals, and it was difficult for me in the beginning to impress upon some of the members the necessary sense of discipline.

I have a friend, a general, in former command of one of the Indian divisions, who told me once of the way he managed to correct any detected faults in the performances of his regimental band. He has absolutely no ear for music—indeed, he candidly admits that he dislikes it very much, but all the same, he wanted his band to be considered as good as any other in the army. Therefore, when any visitors came to his station, he would order the band out, make them play, and get the opinion of his guests afterwards. Then, if any fault was found, he would send for the bandmaster, pretend to be very knowing, and say to him : " That piece was too fast," " The ophicleide made a mistake in the fourteenth bar," " The cornet was out of tune," as the case might be, and would give orders that matters should forthwith be put right according to a way that he himself had invented. The ophicleide player was made to stand by himself at the next parade in front of his brother musicians, to be inwardly jeered at by them ; or the poor cornet had to march up and down until he got the faulty

passage perfect. As for the drummers, when anything unfavourable was said about them, they were ordered to climb up about a thousand feet in the broiling sun, some on one hill and some on another, and, with the bandmaster down below in the valley, drum away at each other for a good hour. They were generally all right after this.

Of course, I could not adopt this mode of discipline with the Hallé orchestra. In the first place, my trumpet player, perambulating the streets, might have been mistaken for one of his less fortunate brethren, who are usually associated with pavement curbs (the police are no judges of good music), and that would have been unpleasant both for him and me: and with regard to my drummer, even though there happen to be no hills in Manchester, the exertion at his time of life of drumming continuously for an hour would certainly have been too much for him, and might have deprived me of his services for many weeks.

This I need hardly say is only meant "faseshus-like," as Artemus Ward would have put it. No severity was ever necessary, for I very soon managed, by a little tact and persuasion, to restore the old order to the camp, and we got on thence-forth very pleasantly and amicably together—a condition of things that has happily prevailed ever since, at least, in respect of all those members of the orchestra with whom I am still often in contact.

The band, indeed, was, and for that matter is still, one of the best in this country, excellent in

technique and ensemble, and thoroughly routined in their playing—as was only to be expected from a body of musicians who had been working together for many years. I had a striking proof of this at a performance of "Samson and Delilah" at one of the concerts. It happened that when we came to rehearsal the same morning the music, owing to some carelessness, had never been ordered. We were in a great dilemma, for it was impossible at that late hour to substitute any other work. There was only one thing to be done, and I risked it. The parts were telephoned for from London, whence they arrived just before the concert, and we performed the opera through from beginning to end without a hitch of any sort. It is true that some of the artists had already sung the work with me elsewhere, and the band had played it two or three years previously, but after such a long interval, and with the hundreds of other pieces they had played since, it was really like reading a new work at sight, and was an almost unexampled *tour de force*, one which, however, I should not care to repeat.

My Manchester chorus I also found a little difficult to manage in the beginning. They were not unruly, but they had decided opinions of their own, and a rather exaggerated sense of their own dignity and respectability. I remember I had announced for one of the early choral concerts a work by Stanford, called "Phaudrig Crohoore," a setting of Sheridan Lefanu's well-known poem of the same name. The words were in the Irish poet's

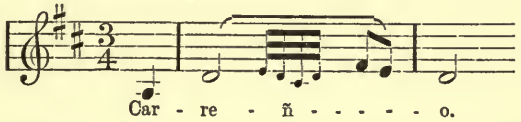
usual lively and racy style, but perfectly harmless. When we had had a couple of rehearsals, I received letters from some of the choir, saying that they could not possibly consent to sing a work which contained allusions to such things as the "divil," a "broth of a boy," whom all the girls "from thirty-five under" ran after, and so forth. They also said that the idea of performing such a work would be enough to make Hallé turn in his grave. I tried to reason with them, and to point out that "Phaudrig" had already been given in several places without any comment of the sort, that the words were as innocent as those that issue from the lips of a babe, and that it was absurdly prudish on their part to object to performing it. I remarked, further, that if Lefanu had his poem with him in the place where I trusted both he and Hallé were, and had shown it to the latter, I was convinced that he (Hallé) would think as I did. But it was all of no use. They had decided in their minds that they would not sing it; therefore, not wishing to create any unpleasantness, I was obliged to give way, and had to substitute "The Revenge" in its place.

My drummer, to whom I alluded just now, was a man of the name of Batley. Besides playing in the orchestra, he had been Hallé's right hand for a good many years, looking after the music library, and making all the arrangements for the numerous professional journeys of the band to other towns, such as taking the tickets, engaging special trains, etc. With all these matters he was more identified

and better known to the railway officials than Hallé himself. The latter used to tell a very amusing story with regard to this. One evening, after a concert in some outside town, he was rather delayed, and arrived at the station just as the special train containing the members of his orchestra was about to depart. The barrier was already closed. Hallé, in a great hurry, tried to get through, but the ticket collector, not recognizing him, refused, saying, "You can't go by this train —you're too late." "But," said Hallé, "I *must* get back to Manchester to-night. Let me pass, please." A sudden inspiration dawned in the official's mind, and he asked, "Do you belong to Batley's band?" "Yes, yes," replied Hallé, laughing to himself. "Then it's all right," said the man, "hurry up." Hallé rushed along the platform, and just caught the train as it was moving out of the station.

There is no need to enter into detail about the concerts during this period. I may, however, just specify a few of the artists who took part in them from time to time. Lady Hallé and Joachim appeared together for the only time within my recollection, and gave a perfect rendering of the double concertos of Bach and Spohr. Eugen d'Albert came to us, after an absence of many years from England; and we also had Paderewski (more than once), Bussoni (who made, I think, almost his first appearance, at all events with orchestra, at our concerts), and a little later, Teresa Carreño, then developed from the young

beginner of our youthful touring days into the great pianist as we know her to-day.

The mention of Carreño recalls another of Moszkowski's witticisms that I ought not to have omitted when speaking of musicians' jokes two or three chapters back. He was asked once how her name was spelt. "It is quite easy," he said, and at once sang the following phrase :

This musical joke may perhaps require some explanation to non-musical readers. To put it in the simple, unaffected manner of the child's first primer, *Car* (quart) is the interval of a fourth between the first two notes ; *re* is the note D ; and the ~ over the *n*—really the wittiest part of the joke—has a double meaning, being used equally for the Spanish pronunciation of that letter and as the sign in music for a turn, as represented by the four small notes. If I have been too explicit or have credited any of my readers with insufficient musical knowledge, I hope they will pardon me.

Sarasate also played with us on several occasions. The celebrated violinist used always to carry in his waistcoat pocket an exquisite tiny model of his favourite Stradivarius, most perfectly made, even to the little strings, pegs, and mahogany case lined with velvet. This, he said, was his mascotte. But it did not prevent him from having a little mishap one evening. He had started to play one of his

own Spanish dances, but quite forgot what he was doing, and could not get beyond the two opening bars, which he repeated over and over again. The music had quite gone from his mind for the moment; so, turning to me with a bland smile, he said: "Je l'ai oublié"; and I had to stop the orchestra until he had recovered himself. Then, on a second trial, it all came back to him, and he played the piece through without any further accident.

It is surprising how often artists, even the greatest, lose themselves in this way, cutting out whole bars, or coming in too soon or too late. Bülow, with all his wonderful memory, constantly forgot what he was playing, but he had a sly knack of extemporizing until he picked up the thread again, and very few people ever noticed that anything was wrong. One of the most flagrant instances I know was when a certain pianist was performing the Grieg Concerto with me. In the last movement where the theme appears in C major, he, or she—I will not say which—went straight to its second entry in A major, and consequently for quite an appreciable time the piano and orchestra were playing in totally different keys, with an effect that was far from agreeable. I hardly knew what to do, but did not like to stop the performance, so I went on conducting calmly until eventually he (or she) discovered the mistake and returned once more to harmony and safety. A conductor requires a cool head under such circumstances, I can tell you, and it is usually

owing to his self-possession that serious disasters are avoided.

Sarasate's case is the only instance of an absolute breakdown that has ever come under my own experience.

Among the vocalists at the concerts were several young artists, since become very prominent figures in our musical life; notably, Clara Butt, Agnes Nicholls, and Muriel Foster; the two latter nearly, if not quite, began their career under my direction in a performance of Parry's oratorio, "Judith."

The Liverpool Philharmonic Society was in the happy position of being unhampered by pecuniary considerations, and therefore, besides all the artists I have already mentioned, they were able to engage such operatic celebrities as Melba, Albani, and others.

It was there also that Elgar's "King Olaf" received an early, if not the earliest hearing, after its great festival success, and that Berlioz's opera, "The Trojans at Carthage," was produced in England. This work, the second portion of a grand lyrical poem composed nearly forty years previously (the first was called "The Siege of Troy"), had never yet been heard in this country, and though the performance was, of course, only in concert form, it aroused considerable curiosity in musical circles.

The history of the opera is very interesting. Berlioz had been much impressed with the subject for several years, but he resisted the temptation of

working on it, fearing that the Parisians would treat it as they had treated most of his other compositions—namely, with misunderstanding and abuse. However, a circumstance occurred that caused him either to alter his feelings or, at least, to rise above them, and to take up in earnest the project that had been so long in his mind. While in Weimar in 1855 he happened to meet the Princess Wittgenstein, Liszt's friend and admirer, and the conversation turning on the proposed opera, Berlioz spoke to her despondently of all the disappointments and worries it would be sure to cause him, and said that he could never bring himself to set to work on it. The Princess would not hear of this, and said to him: "You *must* begin the opera, and finish it. If you are frightened at the trouble it will and ought to cause you, if you are feeble enough not to brave all for Dido and Cassandra, never present yourself at my house again; I will see you no more." This put Berlioz on his mettle, and in three years from that time the opera was finished. The first part was never performed during the composer's lifetime—in fact, not until 1891—but "The Trojans at Carthage" was produced in Paris five years after its completion (1863) with, for him, an unusual success, as it ran for twenty-one nights.

Like nearly all his works, except "Faust," the opera contains a great deal of fine music together with much that is weak and uninteresting. It did not obtain more than a *succès d'estime* in Liverpool; and the same was the case in Manchester and

Bradford, where we performed it the following season.

The position which enabled, or, I should say, enables, the Liverpool Philharmonic Society to engage any and every celebrated artist they wish, is quite unique. The hall, the most elegant and comfortable in the kingdom, was built on the proprietary system nearly seventy-five years ago, and belongs to the subscribers themselves, whose seats, at least with regard to their own concerts, are their private property, to keep or dispose of as they feel inclined. On this account the annual receipts from the rental of the hall for other musical and social entertainments (a fairly substantial sum) make them more or less independent of monetary considerations, and may be employed on the advancement of their concerts and the constant improvements to the building. It is a felicitous plan, and one that might advantageously be adopted in other towns where the fear of pecuniary loss is so often the cause of stinted rehearsals and poor executive talent and other drawbacks to a really good performance.

The year following my appointment at Manchester and Liverpool, I was elected conductor of the Bradford Festival Choral Society, and a little while after that I also undertook the direction of the Bradford Permanent Orchestra. The latter position I only kept for a year or two. It was really an amateur society, and though quite creditable in its way, it entailed more extra work than I cared for; added to which, the concerts

being on Saturday evenings, I was prevented from spending the week-end at home, as I always liked to do. They were a good set of fellows, though, and had an admiration for me that was as unusual as it was pleasant. When, in 1900, I received my Mus. Doc. degree at Cambridge, they made it the excuse for presenting me with a very handsome testimonial, which gave me the opportunity of remarking to them, that "if absence makes the heart grow fonder, *presents* make it fonder still."

This hon. degree was conferred upon Elgar at the same time as upon myself, and I shall never forget what we both looked like on the occasion. To buy the necessary elaborate gowns was a very expensive matter, so we borrowed them on the spot. Elgar's did not reach much below his knees, and mine trailed upon the ground, and we presented the funniest pictures imaginable, as, seated one on each side of the Vice-Chancellor, we listened to the public orator discoursing in Latin on our respective accomplishments. His remarks were, no doubt, very flattering, but I did not understand much about them (I cannot say whether Elgar did); however, we both blushed very prettily and modestly when we heard a word now and then that sounded familiar, like "Scandinaviam" or "Variationem."

I recollect, also, that on our way back to London we concocted between us a musical postcard to a mutual friend—the only time that he and I have ever collaborated in a composition. This consisted of a ground bass founded on my three initials,

F. H. C. (H in German notation is B♮), to which Elgar put a counterpoint, beginning with *his* initials E. E. The words were something like this: "We are two Mus. Docs. newly made, returning to our homes;" and we signed ourselves, "Yours by *degrees*," which ending, the one who suggested it (I forget which of us it was) considered a real stroke of genius.

I had the offer of another post about this time, and that was the conductorship of the Buxton Spa Orchestra. The secretary came to see me one day in Manchester and tried hard to persuade me to accept. The salary, he confessed, was not a large one, but the band, numbering about thirty players, was quite good, and might possibly be increased to thirty-five if I desired it. He also said that the air of Buxton was known to be very healthy, and the summer months spent there would be very beneficial to me. Not wishing to appear ungrateful for his kind solicitude, I told him I would think it over. I had already come to the conclusion that, speaking colloquially, "I wasn't taking any"; there was really nothing in the state of my health as far as I knew that required benefiting, and an assembly of gouty and rheumatic people, and an atmosphere of saline waters, were scarcely what I was seeking at the time for a summer holiday, especially in combination with musical duties; so I wrote him the next day declining the offer. I dare say he thought me rather fastidious.

Under any circumstances I did not care to spend the whole year in conducting concerts, important

or otherwise, as I still desired to devote as much time as possible to composition.

In 1896, our past little differences having been settled, the London Philharmonic once more extended its hand of friendship towards me, and produced my orchestral suite "In Fairyland." The work was a series of six short miniatures dealing with the doings of fairies, giants, and dwarfs, and in its own small way proved quite successful. I also wrote my first set of old English dances during this year, and sketched out my sixth symphony, "The Idyllic," which was completed in 1897, and performed by Richter at one of his concerts. This year also saw the composition of a tenor scena, "The Dream of Endymion," sung by Ben Davies at a special Philharmonic Concert in commemoration of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, and a Concertstück for piano and orchestra written for Paderewski.

In 1898 my "Ode to the Passions" for chorus and orchestra received its first hearing at the Leeds Festival. The occasion of its production is very vivid in my recollection, as it came at the same moment with another and far less agreeable event.

It must not be thought that this little book is being written with a view to airing my grievances; but as it is somewhat in the nature of a short autobiography as well as a volume of reminiscences, I feel that I ought to state things just as they happened, whether they be pleasant or otherwise.

The matter was this. A few days before the Leeds Festival the syndicate which had taken over

the control of the Hallé concerts wrote to inform me that after the next season they would no longer require my services, as they intended to engage Richter to come and reside in Manchester in the capacity of their permanent conductor. It appeared that the position had been offered to him before I came on the scene, but that he was prevented from accepting it then on account of his agreement with the Vienna Opera House ; he promised, however, to consider it again as soon as he was free. This fact they kept dark, for they were fully aware of the difficulty they would have had in finding an efficient successor to Hallé in the interim had their intentions got abroad.

I was entirely unprepared for the blow, which came upon me like a thunderbolt. They had no fault to find with me (this they were candid enough to admit) ; the performances had been artistically quite satisfactory, and the profits from the two seasons much larger than any they had had for a long time. No one could possibly admire Richter's great gifts more than I did, but even personal friend as he was, it was very galling to me to think that there I had been for a couple of years striving to maintain the success of the concerts to the best of my ability, without the faintest notion that I was simply "keeping the place warm" all the while for my celebrated colleague to step into whenever he felt so disposed. As soon as I received the syndicate's intimation of their intentions, I felt that the matter was hopeless. Nevertheless, I tried my best to get them to reconsider

it before they came to a definite arrangement with Richter, telling them that I had been led to believe by one of their number that my appointment was a permanent one (which was the case), and how damaging it might be to my reputation to be thus cast aside without any plausible reason. But it had no effect. As a matter of fact, I believe they had already protected themselves against any possible chance of my engagement continuing by getting Richter's agreement signed and sealed. They certainly did hold a meeting of guarantors for the apparent purpose of discussing the question, but although a few of these sided with me, they were powerless against the large majority whose vote had, without doubt, been canvassed for beforehand. I had, therefore, to accept the inevitable, and swallow the pill as best I could, without any jam, except my own conscience, to make it taste better.

The affair got into the newspapers the day before the production of my Leeds work, and when I came on to the platform, and again at the conclusion of the piece, I received an ovation the intensity of which I have not often witnessed at a festival. This enthusiastic reception I did not take as an appreciation of my new work, but—as it was largely meant to be—in token of a genuine Yorkshire expression of sympathy and desire to see "fair play."

The system that was for so long prevalent of engaging foreign musicians to hold permanent positions in this country is one that cannot be too strongly protested against. Ready and glad as we

always have been to welcome to our shores all artists of eminence, no matter of what nationality, and to applaud and appreciate their performances, it is a different matter when they come to occupy those important posts that, speaking quite impersonally, should be reserved for our own native musicians. Nothing of the sort exists in any of the other professions ; then why should it in music? It is this, as much as anything else, that has caused the British nation to belittle its own musical offspring ; for it is only natural that when it has seen musicians of other countries at the head of our societies and festivals, it should have thought that there could not be anyone at home capable of holding such a position, or it would have been entrusted to him.

I am glad to see, however, that this hurtful system, if still to some extent present amongst us, is fast disappearing, and I hope the day is not far distant when it will cease to exist.

My last season in Manchester was not a very pleasant one. I felt like a servant might who had received a month's warning to leave, and though I think the sympathy of the audience was for the most part with me, and I did not allow my feelings to interfere with my duties, I had no longer the same incentive to do my best, and lost all interest in the concerts.

Great efforts were made by Manchester to induce the Liverpool Philharmonic to fall in with the new scheme, but the Society remained stanch to me, and I continued to hold my position there for

another thirteen years, only relinquishing the permanent office a short while ago, while still retaining my pleasant associations with the Society as conductor of a certain number of the concerts during each season.

The only other occurrences of these years that I need to record were a recital I gave in 1898 in St. James's Hall of my own compositions (my last concert up to now) for the purpose of introducing to the public some recent albums of songs, and in which I had the valued co-operation of Clara Butt, Esther Palliser, Fanny Davies, Lloyd, Santley, and other celebrated artists; a flying trip I took to Canada in the summer of 1899 on behalf of the Royal College of Music examinations; and a festival at Scarborough which I conducted in the same year.

The scheme was started by a few local gentlemen of influence, and was the first attempt at establishing anything of the kind in this popular seaside resort. The chorus was very good, though the voices were not so powerful and resonant as those of the West Riding, and the orchestra was selected from among the best London instrumentalists. The performances, consisting of "St. Paul," "The Golden Legend," and a final miscellaneous concert, were given in the Spa Hall, the only place we could find that was at all suitable. It was a nice, comfortable concert-room, but the accommodation was limited—at least, we thought it would prove so—and it had another inconvenient drawback. It was right on the sea, and the sound of the waves

could be heard plainly throughout the performances. This was all very well on a calm evening, and during such pieces as "O star of eve" and "How sweet the moonlight," to which it made a soothing extra accompaniment; but when Lloyd sang: "It is the sea, silent, majestical, and slow," while the wind howled and the waves dashed over the parapet nearly to the doors of the building, the effect was somewhat incongruous, and distinctly disturbing. As it turned out, the smallness of the hall did not matter much, for it was never more than half full. The public did not respond as they should have done: they were too busy catching shrimps, riding donkeys, and other such inartistic pursuits, and in consequence, there was a considerable call on the guarantors' pockets after the festival was over.

Nothing daunted, they tried again three years later, but the result was as discouraging as before, and the scheme "turned up its (musical) toes to the (unmusical) daisies," and was heard of no more.

There was one member of the audience, however, who evidently enjoyed the performances thoroughly and—being a person of taste—also admired my conducting, for she (it was a lady) came to me at the hotel and asked me if I would give her a lesson. She was conductor of a small choral society in some out-of-the-way town or village, and wanted to perfect herself in the art on the conducting-taught-in-one-lesson principle. I was, of course, highly flattered, and told her so; then, like the conjurer, I showed her how the trick was done, without her

being any the wiser afterwards than she was before, and at the end of the hour I informed her that she was now as proficient as she possibly could be, which subtle remark made her very proud of herself. At all events, she went away perfectly happy and satisfied with her one lesson, and with the intention no doubt of showing her choristers what she had learnt at the first opportunity.

Everybody imagines that conducting is quite easy, just the same as they think it is easy to learn to sing or to play the piano.

A celebrated pianist told me the other day that once during his travels he received a long letter from a young lady asking to be allowed to come and see him on an important matter. She did not mention what it was, but something in the wording of the letter induced him to make an appointment with her. The first thing she said when she entered the room was :

"It came to me as I was going downstairs !"

"What ?" he inquired.

"The piano !" she replied.

"Do you mean to say that the piano actually came to you as you were walking downstairs ?"

"What nonsense ! No. What I mean is that the *idea* suddenly struck me on the staircase."

"What idea ? I am afraid I am rather dull this morning, but I don't quite understand."

"Well, it was like this. I must tell you that though my family is not at all musical, we have a piano in our drawing-room, and on the day when

this idea suddenly came into my mind, I rushed there as quickly as I could, sat down to the piano, *and found I could play!*"

"How very extraordinary! And you would like me to give you some lessons?"

"Of course; that's what I came for."

"Well, sit down and play me something."

"I don't play—yet; I only extemporize."

She then seated herself at his piano, and, gazing out of the window for a minute or two, said: "Do you see that pretty view—the hills in the distance, the garden with its trees and many-coloured flowers? I will play *that!*"

Whereupon she scratched her hands up and down the keyboard for about a quarter of an hour, making a discordant, feeble sound that was more like a mouse in a fit than anything else; then she got up, and asked the pianist for his opinion. He gave it to her as politely as he could. Needless to say she did not receive the desired lessons, and has doubtless remained in the extemporizing stage ever since.

My Concertstück, composed for Paderewski at the end of 1897, had to be put aside for some time, awaiting his pleasure. At last, in 1900, a fitting opportunity presenting itself at the London Philharmonic, where he was engaged to play that season, he decided to take up the piece and perform it there. I went over to Paris for a few days to work up the music with him and to make sundry revisions and elaborate certain of the passages to

suit his immense technique. This gave me the chance of killing another bird with the same stone, for during our leisure hours we visited the Exhibition, where his well-known personality made him the cynosure of all eyes, and, I may say also, of all photographic cameras. Not taking into consideration a very early concerto, the Concertstück was the first work for piano and orchestra I had written, and its performance at the Philharmonic, through his fine interpretation, proved very brilliant and effective.

It was somewhere about this year, I think, that I had the pleasure of meeting Carmen Sylva (the Queen of Roumania) on one of her visits to London. Notwithstanding my four failures, I was still harping on the idea of composing operas, and being an admirer of Her Majesty's literary and poetic gifts, I endeavoured through a personal friend at her Court to induce her to write me a libretto.

She had just completed a drama, and had invited Irving and a few other guests to hear it one morning *en petit comité.*

Amongst these I was included, as she was good enough to say that the occasion might also afford me the chance of talking over my request with her. I do not remember what the drama was about or what was Irving's opinion of it, but I know that she read it in a sweet, sympathetic voice, translating it from the original German into English as she went along—a by no means easy feat—and I have never forgotten her charming

personality, with its intelligent features and mass of short, grey hair, which made one almost forget she was a Queen, and think of her only as the poetic, romantic artist she really was. The idea of the libretto unfortunately came to nothing, but I had a most agreeable and interesting morning.

CHAPTER XV

My reappointment to the Philharmonic—The Scottish Orchestra —Its members' little jokes—The Glasgow Exhibition— Souza — Adventure in Dunfermline — Hard work and travelling—Composition of "The Veil"—Artists and works at the Philharmonic — Brema's little accident — Cardiff Festivals — Welsh Eisteddfods — Louis N. Parker and Swansea—Conductorship of the Handel Festivals—Anecdote of a rehearsal—Little stories about my friends—My mother's great hope—Poem to my piano.

THINGS often turn out better than we expect in this world of chances, and so it happened to me.

The loss of my position in Manchester became before long a twofold gain, for within a twelve-month (in 1900) I was re-elected to the London Philharmonic (conducted for the previous seven seasons by Mackenzie) and also obtained an entirely new appointment — namely, the conductorship of the Scottish Orchestra in Glasgow.

This society is not as much known to us Southerners as it deserves to be. Its origin—or, rather, that of the Glasgow Choral Union, from which it sprang—dates back a good many years. At first the Choral Union pursued the even tenor of its way undisturbed, but there came a split in the camp, and the Scottish Orchestra was formed in opposition to the older Society, to the great detriment of both ; so much so that after a couple

of years' struggle the two institutions were amalgamated, in which favourable position they still continue.

My predecessors, reckoning both societies, were, first a local musician of the name of Lambeth, then Sullivan, Tausch (who, by-the-by, wrote the only Drum Concerto I know of), Manns, Henschel, Kes, and Wilhelm Bruch. I was, therefore, only the third Britisher in this long list of their conductors.

The orchestra has almost from its first inception consisted of young players of ability; and, indeed, it has been the nursery for nearly all other orchestral institutions. There are few of our chief instrumentalists who have not at one time or another gone through the mill and gained their early experience in Glasgow. For this reason there is plenty of youthful energy and enthusiasm in the orchestra, and a responsiveness arising from constant performances under the same conductor which are very refreshing and exhilarating.

It seems to me that the modern fashion of having different *chefs d'orchestre* for every concert, excellent though these may be and interesting as personalities from the public's point of view, is somewhat of a mistake.

Orchestral technique and interpretation have made immense strides within recent years, and consequently a high standard of excellence in the performances has been reached; but, however fine these performances may be under this continual change of conductors, they must surely be still

better where the control is in the hands of one permanent chief (provided he be a capable one), whose every movement or slightest gesture is known to the players, and followed by them almost instinctively.

The ten winters I passed in Glasgow were on the whole very agreeable. The climate, it is true, is not the finest in the world—though it is considered so by the makers of umbrellas and waterproofs and the repairers of chimney-pots—but my artistic duties and the life generally were quite congenial.

My orchestra, as I have already mentioned, was composed for the most part of young musicians, fresh to their work, but thoroughly well trained and efficient. They were full of high spirits, and reminded me very much of schoolboys, to whom I played the part of a not too strict schoolmaster, but who never overstepped the boundary-line between respect and undue familiarity. That I did not inspire any fear in their minds is proved by their many harmless little jokes at my expense that arose from their exuberant natures, and that they were fully aware I should accept in the spirit in which they were meant.

An instance of this was when one day at rehearsal, shortly after the performance of my "Butterflies' Ball" Overture, I found on my desk a child's book containing an authentic account of this familiar nursery tale, with the usual coloured illustrations, among which was a picture of insects playing various instruments, and conducted by a huge "blue-bottle"

fly—labelled by my jocular friends, "Ye Scottish Orchestra."

Another time, being unavoidably delayed in the artists' room on some business matter, I was three or four minutes late for rehearsal, and when I came on to the platform I found them all busily engaged in playing the Blue Danube Waltz as loudly as they could, in subtle attestation of their own punctuality and my want of it. But they never carried their innocent fun beyond reasonable limits, nor was there ever any real insubordination.

Nothing, for example, like what happened when I was conducting a rehearsal with another orchestra in the provinces. On this occasion I noticed that one member of the band seemed rather "off colour," and was playing in a muddled, slipshod sort of way. I stopped, and asked him if he were not well, to which he answered; "Oh, yesh! I'm all right!" I accepted his statement, though I guessed by this time what was the matter; but when I had finished the piece I was rehearsing, he got up and said; "Dr. Cowen, I musht ask you to play thish overture again, not only for my sake, but for your own and all the orcheshtra's." I remarked that if I thought it desirable to rehearse the piece any more I should do so, but that I hardly considered it was his place to dictate to me in what way I should conduct my own rehearsals. Whereupon his son, who was also a member of the orchestra, stood up and said: "Let me tell you, Dr. Cowen, that (hic) if my father says you musht

play (hic) thish piece again, you musht play it. You're a conductor, not a (hic) bus-conductor !"

This impromptu scene had its humorous side, but I felt that it was now being carried a little too far. So I sent for the superintendent, and said to him, while the rest of the band looked on half-amused, half-ashamed : " Will you kindly tell these gentlemen to leave the orchestra, and that I shall not require their services any more." Then came the funniest part of the whole incident. The son put his violin under his arm, and drawing himself up as well as circumstances would permit, said : " Leave the orcheshtra ? Of coursh, I will leave the orcheshtra ! You don't (hic) think I want to take (hic) the orcheshtra with me ?"

This repartee was so spontaneous and laughable that it made me almost inclined to forgive him then and there. As a matter of fact, I did forgive them both the next day, when father and son came to me and explained very apologetically that they had been " celebrating " the former's birthday together, and they were duly reinstated in their respective positions in the orchestra.

We had two concerts a week in Glasgow—on Tuesdays and Saturdays. The Saturday evening audience was the more appreciative of the two. It was an assemblage mostly of habitués who attended regularly, and sat nearly in the same seats week after week. I soon got to look upon them more as personal friends or members of one large family than as a usual concert audience ; indeed, this, so to speak, close sympathy between us was of so intimate

and informal a nature that I often had the feeling that if I were to turn a somersault on to the platform, or stand on my head to conduct a symphony, they would only have been amused at it, as they would at any similar feat performed in their own drawing-rooms. I have never felt like this with any other audience.

It was the custom on the last night of each season—which was always a plebiscite concert—for the conductor to make a speech, like an actor-manager, and for the reason, doubtless, that before my arrival the public had had to put up with the very broken English of my foreign colleagues, they took very kindly to whatever remarks I had to make, and laughed heartily at any silly little jokes I could think of to amuse them.

On one of these evenings, there having been a discussion going on during the season as to the relative merits of foreign and British conductors, I I told them that I intended to return the following year "with *Herr* in front of my name, and *hair* at the back of my head."

Another time I began my speech by saying, in allusion to the termination of the season, that "everything comes to an end at last—even a journey on one of their local railways"—a little satire that was not lost on them.

This was not brilliant oratory, but it answered its purpose, and was a relief from the Pathetic Symphony, with which work the season usually closed.

In the autumn of 1901 we were engaged for a

month's performance at the Glasgow Exhibition. The celebrated Souza, with his band, was there at the same time, and, as we were staying in the same hotel, we met very frequently. Of an evening, when our work was over, we used to have many pleasant talks together—that is to say, he did all the talking and I did all the listening, which was the way he liked best to carry on a conversation. He gave his concerts at alternate times with ours, and whenever I saw him in the ante-room getting himself ready, or, rather, being got ready for his public appearance—for he had a black servant who put the finishing touches, waxed his moustaches for him, etc.—I used to chaff him about his uniform and numerous medals, and tell him that I had written home for my beautiful damask academic gown, and that when it came his attraction in the public eye would pale into insignificance compared with mine. Our organization supplied the rest of Scotland with orchestral music, much in the same way that the Manchester Orchestra supplied the North of England. We had weekly concerts in Edinburgh, and other performances at short intervals in the other chief towns, such as Dundee and Aberdeen.

It was very lucky that with all this going about in the depth of a Scotch winter our unpleasant experiences should have been as few as they were. We were never snowed up, as is so often the fate of other travellers, but one night in Edinburgh the band were delayed for three or four hours in a fog between Glasgow and that city, in consequence of

which we did not begin the concert until half-past nine, and had to cut out nearly half the programme.

I had also a very disagreeable ten minutes once in Dunfermline. It was a very frosty, slippery night, and four of us had taken a cab after the concert so as to be in good time for our special train back to Glasgow. There is a long and steep hill leading to the station, and we had only just commenced to descend it when something went wrong with the brake. The driver lost control, the poor horse could hardly keep his feet, and we found ourselves gradually sliding down the hill, at first slowly, then more and more rapidly, until in the end our vehicle turned completely round, literally putting the cart before the horse, and in this ignominious position we performed the last four or five minutes of our journey, being deposited finally with an alarming bump on to the kerb outside the station.

Fortunately, our cab was not upset, but *we* were —very much so—and it was only when we were safely in the train that we began to see any humour at all in the situation.

Besides my work in Scotland, I had my other regular duties in Liverpool and Bradford to attend to. All this entailed an immense amount of travelling in all weathers, and at all times of the day and night. As an example of what my life was during the time I held all these positions, I may say that frequently I used to leave Glasgow on Monday morning, hold a rehearsal the same day in Liverpool for a concert the next, return to Glasgow

by the night train for a rehearsal there on the Wednesday, and go on to Dundee or some other Scotch town for a concert the same evening. From Dundee I would go straight through to Bradford, have a rehearsal and concert there on the Friday, and travel again all through the night, so as to reach Glasgow in time for the rehearsal and concert on the Saturday. This was not at all an exceptional week's work, and it was little wonder that after ten years of this wear and tear, I broke down completely, and that, on my recovery, Scotland was thenceforth omitted from the list of my professional duties.

Naturally, all this constant occupation during the winter in one branch of my art left me little or no leisure to devote to the other; therefore, I tried to divide the year as well as I could into two parts, conducting in the winter and composing in the summer. Among my chief compositions during these years, taking them in the order in which they were written, were the overture, "The Butterflies' Ball"; an orchestral poem, "A Phantasy of Life and Love" (for the Gloucester Festival of 1901); an "Indian Rhapsody"; the cantata, "John Gilpin"; a short work for contralto solo and chorus, "He giveth His beloved sleep" (both of these for the Cardiff Festival); and the oratorio, "The Veil," at which latter composition I worked on and off for five years. I may also mention a march written for the Coronation of King Edward, and performed in Westminster Abbey during the ceremony, and a Coronation Ode to a poem by

Lewis Morris, which was intended for the State Concert, but this function not taking place, it was ultimately produced at the Norwich Festival.

My reappointment as conductor of the London Philharmonic was continued for another eight seasons, namely, from 1900 to 1907. There is no need to speak in detail about these concerts. All I will do is to record briefly a few of the most important events that took place under my direction during these years.

In 1901, Elgar's overture, "Cockaigne," composed expressly for the society, was performed with much success. During the season of 1902 Kubelik made his first appearance with us; and another not unimportant occurrence was the performance of a charming little ballet by Mozart, "Les Petits Riens," hitherto entirely unknown in England. In 1903 we had Kreisler (soon after his great success at one of Richter's concerts), and also the gifted and much regretted American composer, MacDowell, who made his initial appearance in this country, and played his own pianoforte concerto.

The year 1905 saw the début of the 'cellist Casals in Saint-Saëns' concerto, and Bach's Suite in C—the beginning of a success that has gone on increasing year by year, and has now placed him in a position which few if any other 'cellists have occupied in the affection of English audiences.

The following season Weingärtner conducted his Symphony in G; Mischa Elman played for the first time at the Philharmonic; and the Bradford

Festival Choral Society came up and assisted at a fine performance of Beethoven's Choral Symphony.

In 1907, Tivadar Nachez played his own clever violin concerto, and the Finnish composer, Sibelius, visited London to conduct his Third Symphony in C. It was at this concert, I think, that Marie Brema also sang, and a diverting circumstance happened which was not announced in the programme. I was leading her on to the platform, and was just on the point of stepping aside to allow her to pass in front of me, when I awkwardly trod on her skirt, and ripped it away from what I believe are, or were, called its gathers. The damage was so severe that she had to return to the artist's room to be pinned up, while a ripple of laughter went round the audience, and it was some minutes before her state was sufficiently decorous for her to appear again and commence her songs. I apologized afterwards for my awkwardness, and made matters as pleasant and soothing as I could for her by telling her that it was really the most "ripping" concert I had ever taken part in.

It was a curious coincidence that at the final concert of this season (also my last as permanent conductor) the symphony—the "Pastoral"—should have been the same as the one with which I had concluded my first term of office with the Society fifteen years previously.

Another appointment during these busy years was that of conductor of the Cardiff Festival. These festivals were originally under the direction of Barnby, but after his death they remained in

abeyance for some time, and it was only in 1902 that they were revived and the position of musical chief offered to me. The performances were of a high standard : an excellent choir and orchestra, singers of the first rank, and a programme of interesting works, including Cesar Franck's "Beatitudes," which beautiful and impressive oratorio—except for one performance in Scotland a few years earlier—had never yet been heard in this country.

Notwithstanding all this, the festival was not a financial success. We have had three more since—in 1904, 1907, and 1910—all on the same artistic lines, and all with the same discouraging result.

However, the motto of the Cardiff people, or, at all events, of the prime movers in the scheme, is *nil desperandum*, and I am told that they intend to try again next year.

The principal causes, I think, of this continued financial loss have been that the music-lovers in Cardiff are not in themselves sufficiently numerous to carry through such a scheme with success, and also that the real Welsh folk of the surrounding districts have never given the festivals anything like the support they should have done. Here has been a favourable opportunity for them to hear the best music performed on a scale impossible anywhere else in Wales, but they have never seemed disposed to take advantage of it. To tell the truth, the Principality has little love for music, except the vocal side of it, and even in this their chief interest lies in competitive singing and the

desire to gain as many prizes as possible to the discomfiture and envy of their rivals. For music *per se*, and especially for orchestral music—I am speaking, of course, of the large working population of which Wales, or certainly South Wales, is mostly composed—they care little or nothing.

They are also exceptionally clannish—if I may use the term—and bound up in their own native music and musicians. For this reason the progress of the art in all its branches, as we in other parts of the kingdom know it, is a thing of which they are, and seem quite willing to remain, almost entirely ignorant.

Their Eisteddfods—or, to use the proper plural, Eisteddfodau—may be very ancient and picturesque institutions, and encouraging in a way to the vocal efforts of local choirs (which, let me add, are usually excellent); but that these bodies should devote so many months of each year to the practice of three or four comparatively unimportant pieces, to the neglect of all other music, even carrying their desire to excel into their very physical movements—I have seen them applauded vociferously for the unanimous way in which they stood up and sat down—is a matter that cannot make for their musical advancement, but, on the contrary, only helps to retard it.

The fact, also, that the chief stimulus to their exertions lies not in the merit of the performances they may give, but in the money prizes these performances may bring them, is one that not seldom conduces towards jealous and unjust feelings among

the rival bodies, and lowers these meetings to the level of a sort of glorified racecourse, where onlookers and competitors alike are intent on but one object, and that is, to know who has won and who has lost.

I acted as adjudicator some years ago at the National Eisteddfod in Llandudno, when the big prize was awarded, by mutual consent of the other judges and myself, to a hitherto obscure Welsh choir. In announcing the news I did not think it necessary to enter into details as to the respective merits or defects of the various competing bodies; but the conductor of a choir that had been at the top of the poll at nearly all previous meetings came up to me and wanted to know what possible fault I could find with his performances, and why I had not given his choir the prize. He was black with rage and disappointment, and advised me, if I valued my reputation, never to set foot in Wales again. I declined to give him any particulars (in accordance with a decision we judges had arrived at), and told him further that his threat did not frighten me in the least, and that if I desired to come back to Wales I would take the risk on my own shoulders.

I may say here that many adjudicators have had to be secretly escorted from these Welsh gatherings for fear of being molested by the unsuccessful competitors and their friends.

This man's choir, which, to speak fairly, was in many respects one of the best, had made sure of winning as usual, and neither they nor their con-

ductor had taken the slightest interest in any of the proceedings but their own, having left the building after they had sung, as often happens, and heard nothing of the successful choir's efforts; so they had no knowledge of the latter's refinement and delicacy of phrasing, the very qualities in which they themselves were lacking, and which influenced us greatly in awarding the prize.

I attended another Eisteddfod a few years later at Swansea, but, as far as I could recollect, the disappointed choir did not compete, which was a lucky thing for the conductor's peace of mind, as he would again have been beaten.

What a pretty name Swansea is! A friend of mine—the dramatist, Louis N. Parker—told me not long ago that he wanted a nice, quiet place in the country where he could work undisturbed, but did not know where to go. On the spur of the moment he took up the railway guide and looked through it, trusting that he might get an inspiration from some of the names contained therein.

His eye lit upon Swansea, and he immediately said to himself: "This is the place for me! Lovely name—suggests Lohengrin, and swans, and all sorts of poetical and romantic things!" He went there. Needless to say, he did not find anything suggestive of the legendary knight, or his swan, or, I would add, if I did not dislike bad puns, anything *else*, *sir* (Elsa), but ugly buildings and smoke. I believe he did not stay long, but not knowing what else to do, he took refuge at the Mumbles, where he spent a happy fortnight, surrounded by

tea-shops, oyster-shells, penny-in-the-slots, and the other customary delights of seaside trippers.

In 1903 I undertook for the first time the conductorship of the Handel Festival at the Crystal Palace. Originally I was asked by the authorities simply to be in readiness to assist Manns in case his failing strength should prevent him from carrying through the arduous duties of the whole week, but eventually he was unable to conduct at all; the festival was placed in my hands, and it has remained under my direction ever since.

At the outset I was a little bewildered with all that enormous mass of singers and instruments. The great distance from my desk to the back of the platform, and the perceptible difference in time between my beat and the moment when the sound reached my ears were also rather confusing at first; but as soon as I became accustomed to these peculiarities, and realized that what seemed to me unsteady and unbalanced sounded all right in the huge auditorium, I felt easy in my mind, and everything went well.

I managed, too, after a little trouble, to impress upon the choir that it was no more difficult to obtain light and shade and real *pianissimos* with four thousand voices than it was with four hundred, and in consequence we were able to produce effects that had never been heard before in connection with the festival. Some people may scoff at Handel and his straightforward, diatonic harmonies; personally, I know of nothing more exciting, more thrilling, than to listen to some of

his choruses sung by this immense choir, and I have often, while conducting them, felt a cold shiver down my back, which sensation I have rarely, if ever, experienced at any other time or with any other performances.

An amusing incident occurred at one of the rehearsals for my first festival. These rehearsals used to be held in the old Exeter Hall, in which building—or rather the new Strand Palace Hotel that has replaced it—*Lyons* and other hungry and homeless creatures now seek shelter. In this Hall there was a large organ with the maker's name, John Walker, displayed in large letters on its front. Well, after a rehearsal on one very hot evening in June, when the two or three thousand of us forming the London contingent had all been perspiring profusely, I received a letter from one of my tenors, in which he said he had a great favour to ask of me, and that was to have the name on the organ covered over before their next meeting. He added pathetically that to remain for over two hours without moving, in such an atmosphere, with his tongue hanging out of his mouth from thirst, and having to sit all the while directly facing the name of *Johnny Walker*, was very tantalizing, and more than he and his companions could bear.

I thought he was perfectly right, so I had the offending name covered over before the next rehearsal, and told the whole choir what I had done, to their great amusement.

My recollections are now drawing to a close.

There are other events I might speak of, such as

the production of my oratorio "The Veil," my entry, after long years of bachelorship, into the kingdom of Benedicts, etc.; but these are either too recent or too intimate to necessitate their inclusion in this little volume.

The same may be said of my personal friends of to-day, though I *could* relate many little stories about them.

For instance, I might tell how Ben Davies went bicycling with me, and thought three miles a very long and fatiguing ride.

How Andrew Black did the same, and said I scorched, because he arrived at our destination, panting and perspiring, ten minutes after I did; with the result that he refused to go out with me again.

How Henry Arthur Jones prefers a game of bridge to his own dramas.

How Clara Butt invited about twenty of us to a supper party at a restaurant at eight o'clock, and did not herself arrive until past nine, by which time we were starving almost to the point of cannabalism.

How Paderewski also gave a large musicians' dinner, and instead of asking us to sing and play afterwards, treated us to a conjurer, much to our relief and enjoyment.

These and many other harmless little stories I might tell of, but it would not be fair to recall them to my friends' minds, in case they should read these pages; so I won't breathe a word about them.

As at the beginning of this book I made reference to my mother, so may I, now that I am on the point of finishing it, mention her revered

name once more? In a letter she wrote me in my extreme youth she said: "You know with what anxiety I am looking forward to your success (which cannot be without application), and how constantly I pray that one day you may become a great man." I may not have been able to fulfil all that she so ardently hoped for, but her unceasing love and desire for my artistic welfare have been my greatest incentive throughout my career. I have striven earnestly and conscientiously during all these years towards the goal that was ever in her thoughts for me, and if this has not been attained to the full, at least Fortune has dealt not unkindly with me, and I have, I think and hope, done my best with whatever gifts it has pleased Heaven to bestow upon me. What mortal can do more?

In conclusion, I would beg leave to quote a little poem I wrote a few years ago as an apostrophe to my piano. It has already appeared in print, but as the little instrument has been my constant companion throughout all the working hours of my life, and as there is scarcely a musical recollection since my early manhood with which it is not intimately associated, I feel that the verses may form a not inappropriate ending to a book in which these recollections take so large a share.

"Who'd think that one could ever come
To love a thing of steel and wood
As I love thee!
Why not? Men love dumb animals,
And thou at least wert never dumb,
Dear friend, to me!

"'Tis forty years or more since first
Thou gav'st me thy companionship,
And saw the flame
Within, and knew my boyish dreams,
And hopes, and fears, and quenchless thirst
To win a name.

"Since then, there's not a wish or thought
I've not confided to thee, when,
By night or day,
I've lingered near thee, and thy voice
Has cheered me on, the while I fought
My upward way!

"How oft, when to my brain the sound
Of some new melody has come,
And, half afraid
To give it shape, for fear its tones
When *living*, faulty might be found,
I've sought thy aid!

"The disappointment of a life
(Although, perchance, than other men
No worse I've fared),
The many hopes unrealized,
The few fulfilled, the storm and strife;
These hast thou shared!

"Dost thou remember, years ago,
That time I failed? and all the pain
With which I woke
To sense of my young faults, and how
With sympathy and kindred woe
Thy heart strings broke?

"And when at last success drew nigh,
My *first* success, how then I flew
To thee on wings
Of joy, and thanked thee for thy help:
'Now must thou do,' was thy reply,
'Still greater things.'

"And then that day we idly dreamed
Away the hours, *she* and I,
About thy feet!
How softly thou did'st speak to us!
Thy music ne'er before had seemed
One half so sweet!

"We've had our little quarrels, too,
Such times when to the thoughts that whirled
Across my brain

No answer came—'Twas not for long—
A day or so—and thou wert true
And kind again.

"Ah, many are the memories
That, gazing on thy dear, old form,
Come back to me!
Thy past and mine are one—who then
Can ask wherein the wonder lies
That *I* love thee!

"But now thou'rt getting on in years;
Thine ivories, like mine, are stained
And wearing fast;
Thy limbs are bent, thy voice is weak,
Thy charms, I know, to other ears
Are long since past.

"But still to me thou'rt none the less
The fay that helped my every thought,
Or gave it birth—
I love thy tinkling, worn-out voice,
Old friend—the truest I possess
On all this earth!

"I would not part from thee to-day;
No, not for all the gifts that wealth
Could shower down—
Thy well-loved form is dearer far
Than any fame, or artist's bay,
Or hero's crown.

"I could not bear to think when I
Am gone that thou wert left to pass
Thy days ignored,
Alone, or worse still, harshly used,
And in an attic, by-and-by,
As lumber stored.

"No—if, as sure it will, my end
Is first to come, I'll leave thee in
The will I make
To one who'll fondly cherish thee,
And love thee like some dear old friend,
Just for my sake."

And now, with these sentiments, I bid my readers farewell.

INDEX

Agnesi, 39
Albani, 52, 107, 142, 229, 234, 265
Albany, Duke of, 126
Alboni, 13
America, visits to, 73, 288
Ancona, 260
Artôt, Desirée, 14
Australia, voyage to, 187
Australian singers, 201
Australian workmen, independence of, 199

Bache, Walter, 113
Balfe, 49
Ballads, English, 105-06
Bancroft, 161, 178, 230
Barnby, 151, 304
Barrie, J. M., 230
"Batley's" Band, 275
Beaconsfield, Lord, 66
Becker, Hugo, 222
Behrens, 78
Belletti, 14
Benedict, 7, 9, 178
  "St. Peter," 9
Bennett, Joseph, 49, 51, 133, 142, 225, 242
Benoît, Peter, 219
Beresford, Lord Charles, 76
Bergen, anecdote of, 93
Berlin, student days in, 25
Berlioz, 96
  "The Trojans," 279
"Better Land," the, 53, 173
Bismarck, 27
Bispham, 265
Black, Andrew, 311
"Bohemians," the, 75
Boito, friendship with, 252
  threatened duel, 259
Borwick, Leonard, 220
Bradford Festival Choral Society, 281, 304
Bradford Permanent Orchestra, 281
Brahms, 111
  anecdote of his music, 112
Brema, Marie, 304
Brighton Festivals, 52, 71
Brignoli, 40
Brough, Lionel, 158
Browning, Robert, 32
Buchanan, Robert, 157
Buda-Pesth, *Zigener* music at, 118
Bülow, 113-115, 278
Bulwer Lytton, letter from, 238
Burnand's frivolous evenings, 176-180
Busoni, 276
Butt, Clara, 279, 288, 311
"Butterflies' Ball" Overture, 296, 302
Buxton Spa, 283
Byron, H. J., 158

Cambridge, Mus. Doc. Degree at, 282
Campanini, 39, 45
Cardiff Festivals, 304-05
Carreño, Teresa, 37, 276
Carrington, Earl, 76, 206
Carrodus, 145
Casals, 303
"Catch," composed by myself, 81, 82
Cecil, Arthur, 158
  humorous verses by, 171
Clarke, Hamilton, 217
Claughton, Gilbert, 65
Clay, Fred, 49
Cole, Belle, 232
Conductors, anecdotes of, 220-21
Corder's "Nordisa," 243
Corelli, Marie, 156
Coronation March, 302
Coronation Ode, 302
"Corsair," the, 47, 239
Costa, 47
Crotty, Leslie, 244
Crystal Palace Concerts, 30

D'Albert, Eugen, 74, 116, 276
Damrosch, 73
David, Ferdinand, 22

Davies, Ben, 260, 284, 311
Davies, Fanny, 230, 288
Davison, 49, 50
Deakin, Alfred, 209
De Grey, Lord, 64
Del Puente, 37
"Deluge," The, 52
production at Brighton of, 71
De Lussan, Zelie, 243
Denmark, Royal Family of, 94
De Reszke, Jean, 45
De Swert, 45
Di Murzka, Ilma, 45
Dolby, Sainton, 49
Doré, Gustave, 72
Doyle, Conan, 230
'Dream of Endymion," 284
Dudley, Earl of, 7
intercourse with, 63
visits to his country seats, 64
Dunmore, Earl of, 76
Dupplin, Lord, 66, 76
Dvořák, 135, 219

Edinburgh, Duke of, 66, 76
Elgar, "Cockaigne" Overture, 303
joke by, 184
"King Olaf," 279
playing in orchestra, 144
Ella, John, 16
Elman, Mischa, 303
Emperor William, 27
English opera, indifference of public to, 268

Faure, 54, 55
First concert, my, 11
First public appearance, my, 10
Foli, 35, 36
Foreign musicians in permanent positions, 286
Formes, 14
Foster, Muriel, 279
Franchetti, 252
Francillon, 55, 156
humorous poem by, 55
Franck, Cesar, "The Beatitudes," 305

Gade, 89
Garibaldi, 5
Gassier, 15
Gaylord, Julia, 240
Gerardy, Jean, 222
Gerster, Etelka, 54
Gewandhaus, playing at, 80
Ghost story, 43
Giuglini, 14, 15, 135
Glasgow Exhibition, 300
Gloucester Festival, 302
Godard, Benjamin, 136
Goddard, Arabella, 51
Goldmark, 117
Goss, John, 7, 9
Gounod's conducting, 123
"Faust," first performance of, 15
"Mors et Vita," 135
"Redemption," 122
Grain, Corney, 161, 163
Green Room Club, 156, 160
Grieg, 93, 150
Grisi, 14
Grossmith, George, 161, 163-165, 168, 173
Grossmith, Mrs., 174
Grossmith, Weedon, 168

Hallé, Charles, 8, 27, 275-76
concerts, 235, 271
death of, 235
orchestra, 272
Hallé, Lady, 66, 276
Hallström, 87
Handel Festivals, 309-10
Hanslick, 117
Hare, 230
"Harold," composition of the opera of, 235, 262
production of, 265
Harris, Augustus, 260, 263, 266
Hauptmann, 22
Haydn's Farewell Symphony, 102
Toy Symphony, 101, 102
Hegner, Otto, 150
Hellmesberger, 117
Henschel, 27, 295
Her Majesty's Theatre, 13
Herrmann the conjurer, 17
Hersee, Henry, 241
Hiller, Ferdinand, 125
Hohenlohe, Prince, 110
Holmès, Augusta, 136
Hueffer, 133

"In Fairyland" Suite, 235, 284
Invitation in verse for a party, 170
Irish audiences, 38
Irving, 160, 292
Italy, first impressions of, 68

James, 161
Janotha, 221
Joachim, 19, 221, 276
"John Gilpin," 302
Jones, Henry Arthur, 311
Jullien, 99

Keeley, Melbourne critic, 210
Kiel, 25
King Edward, 76, 265
King Oscar of Sweden, 84

Kreisler, 219, 303
Kubelik, 303
Kuhe, 52

Lankester, Ray, 230
"Language of Flowers," 103, 122
Lee, David, anecdote of, 192
Leeds Festival, sympathetic demonstration at, 286
Leigh, Harry S., 158
Leipzig Conservatoire, 21
life in, 20, 24
Leon Cavallo, 252
Leschetitzky, 116
Lewis, Eric, valedictory verses by, 175
Librettists, dearth of, 267
Lind, Jenny, 14
Liszt in Weimar, 61
anecdotes of, 62
Liverpool Exhibition, abrupt termination of my overture at, 138
opening by Queen Victoria of, 137
Liverpool Philharmonic Society, 271, 279, 281, 287
Lloyd, Edward 28, 107, 134, 142, 229, 234, 238
Loch, Sir Henry and Lady, 197, 205
Longfellow, 73
Lucca, Pauline, 54
Lyall, Edna, 157

Maas, Joseph, 135
MacDowell, 303
Macfarren, 49, 141, 151
Macintyre, Margaret, 222
Mackenzie, 129, 130, 133, 183
"Maid of Orleans," music to, 52
Malet, Sir Edward, 262
Manchester Choir's objection to cantata, 274
Manns, 30, 31, 130, 145, 295
Mapleson, 33, 49
Mapleson's Opera Company, 33
Mapleson's Opera Company, anecdotes of my tours with, 35-44
Mario, 14
anecdote of, 62
Marston, Philip, 157
Mascagni, 252
Mattei, Tito, 38
May, Phil, 209, 213
Maybrick, 24
Melba, 254, 256, 260
Melbourne, adventure at a tea picnic, 212
Cup Day, 213
first impressions of, 192
humorous menu at a luncheon, 211
Melbourne Exhibition, anecdotes of, 204
appointment as conductor of, 151
close of, 214
opening ceremony, 197
Mendelssohn, Paul, 27
Mendelssohn Scholarship, 18
Menter, Sophie, 151, 221
Metternich, Princess, 110
Milan, visits to, 67
Passion Play at, 69
Mongini, 14, 45
Montgomery, Alfred, 66
Morris, Lewis, 303
Moscheles, 21
Moszkowski, 184, 219, 277
Mozart's "Les Petits Riens," 303
Murray, David, 172
Mus. Doc. degree at Cambridge, 282
Musical Conference, amusements at 180
Musin, Ovide, 45

National Scottish Academy, proposed establishment of a, 124
National Theatre, D'Oyly Carte's scheme for a, 246
National Training School of Music, 74
Neville, Henry, 161
Nilsson, Christine, 55
in railway accident, 57
Nicholls, Agnes, 279
Nordica, 222
Norway, impressions of scenery in, 95
carrioles in, 91
Norwegian cheeses, 92
Norwich Festivals, 129, 229, 303

"Oasis" Club, 166
"Ode to the Passions," 284
O'Shaughnessy, 157
Oudin, Eugene, 222
Overture, my first, 25

Pachmann, 115, 221
Paderewski, at Norwich Festival, 229
at the Philharmonic, 222
dinner given by, 311
love of billiards, 223
performance of my Concertstück by, 291
Parepa, 32
Parker, Louis N., 308
Parry, Hubert, 216, 279
Patey, Mme., 29, 49, 107, 142
Patti, 13, 55
"Pauline," 52 237
production of the opera, 239
"Phantasy of Life and Love," 302

Philharmonic Society, appointment as conductor of the, 145
my return to the, 218
reappointment to the, 294
rupture with, 223
Piano, poem to my, 312
Piatti, 19
Piccolomini, Marietta, 1
Pinero, 161
Plaidy, 23
Popper, 117
Promenade Concerts, 97, 230
humorous nights at, 101
"Promise of Life," The, 232
Prout, amusing verses by, 171
Prussia, Crown Princess of, 26
Puccini, 252
Pyne, Louisa, 49

Quartett, my first, 24
Queen's Hall, my connection with, 234
Queen Victoria, opening of Liverpool Exhibition by, 137
recital of "Signa" before, 261
Queen of Roumania (Carmen Sylva), 292

Randegger, 129
Ravogli, Guilia, 222
Recital of my songs, 288
Reeves, Sims, 49, 50
Reinecke, 22
Richter, 116, 145, 185
Rivière, 97
Robertson, Forbes, 161
Robinson, Sir William, 190
Rosa, Carl, 32, 239, 242
death of, 227
"Rose Maiden" the, 29
Rosslyn, Earl of, 66
Royal Academy of Music, 151
Roze, Marie, 45
Rubinstein, 70
Russell, Henry, 3
"Ruth" production of, 142

Saint-Saëns, 231-32
"St. John's Eve," 225-26
"St. Ursula," 107, 126
Salon, the, 166,
Sambourne, Linley, 179
"Samson and Delilah" at the Promenades, 231
"Samson and Delilah" without a rehearsal, 274
Santley, 15, 17, 49, 288
as Claude Melnotte, 240
Sarasate, forgetting his own piece, 277
Sarasate's mascotte, 277
Savage Club, 156
Fancy Ball given by the, 123
members of the, 158
Scandinavia, tours in, 78-96
Scarborough Festivals, 288
Scottish Orchestra, 130, 294, 296, 298-99
Schumann, Mme., 147
Schumann's Concerts, 220
Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 75
Shakespeare, W., the musician, 75
Shakespearian Fête at Albert Hall, 128
Sherrington, Lemmens, Mme., 49
Sibelius, 304
'Signa," intended performance at Genoa, 250
misadventures of the opera of, 248-60
performance at Covent Garden, 260
plot of, 247
production in Milan, 257
Sinico, 45
"Sleeping Beauty" at Birmingham, 134
at Paris, 136
under difficulties at Cheltenham, 152
Smart, Sir George, 18
Solms, Prince Albert of, 72
"Song of Thanksgiving," 154, 197
Sousa, 300
Stanford, 109, 274
Stavenhagen, 221
Sterling, Antoinette, 53
Stockhausen, 29
Stockholm, 83, 85
opera performances in, 83
Strauss' "Till Eulenspiegel," 31
Sullivan, 49, 99, 145, 295
Sullivan's "Ivanhoe," 248
Svendsen, Johann, 24, 92, 152
Sweden, dining in, 87
railway travelling in, 79
Switzerland, first trip to, 59
Symphony, my first, 29
my second, at Liverpool, 52
"Scandinavian," 96, 136
first performance in Vienna of the, 108
production of the, 103
"Welsh," anecdote of its performance at the Crystal Palace, 127
at the Philharmonic, 127
my fifth at Cambridge, 141
"Idyllic," performed by Richter, 284
Sydney, visits to, 206-208, 215

Talbò, 89, 90
Tamberlik, 14
"Tannhaüser" Overture, strange performance of, 196
Taubert, 25, 26
Tausch's Drum Concerto, 295
Tausig, 25, 26
Tenniel, 179
Tennyson, 66
Thalberg, 16
Thomas, Brandon, 158, 161
Thomas, Goring, 141
Thomas, Theodore, 73
"Thorgrim," composition of the opera, 227
production of, 243
Thorne, 161
Titiens, 13, 29, 34, 35, 55
Tonic Sol-fa Association, my speech at, 182
Toole, anecdotes of, 162-63
Tosti, 66
"Transfiguration," The, 235
Trebelli, 13, 77, 134, 168
and Grossmith, 169
purloining plates, 88
singing "Almaviva," 77
Tree, Beerbohm, 161
Tremelli, 243
Tschaikowsky, 148, 218

Valleria, Alwina, 89
"Veil," the, 302, 311
Verdi's "Falstaff" at La Scala, 253
Victorian Orchestra, 216
Vienna, visits to, 108, 224
Vieuxtemps, 78
Vokes Family, the, 178

Wagner, anecdote of "Die Meistersinger," 100
Wagner's music, 100
Wain, Louis, sketches by, 172, 184
Warner, Charles, 158
"Water Lily," production at Norwich, 229
withdrawal from Leeds Festival, 228
Weingärtner, 303
Welsh Eisteddfods, 306-308
love of singing, 120
Wood, Henry J., 235
Wyndham, Charles, 161

Ysaye, 219

"Zampa" Overture at Burnand's, 177
Zerbini, 209

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